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# OPERATION MARKET GARDEN



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## **AMBITIOUS PLANS**

HOW 30,000 ALLIED TROOPS  
LED THE ATTACK FROM THE AIR



## **ARNHEM ASSAULT**

BLOW-BY-BLOW ACCOUNTS  
OF THE TENSE URBAN BATTLES



## **A BRIDGE TOO FAR?**

WAS THE OPERATION REALLY  
A COMPLETE FAILURE?





# WELCOME

**T**he final years of World War II saw the Allies win epic battles, but also brought memorable defeats. One such failure was the allied attack on the bridges leading over the Rhine into Germany. This bookazine explores Operation Market Garden and the Battle of Arnhem in fine detail.

Using extensive maps, stunning photography and unforgettable accounts of the action, one of the most controversial Allied operations of WWII is brought vividly to life.





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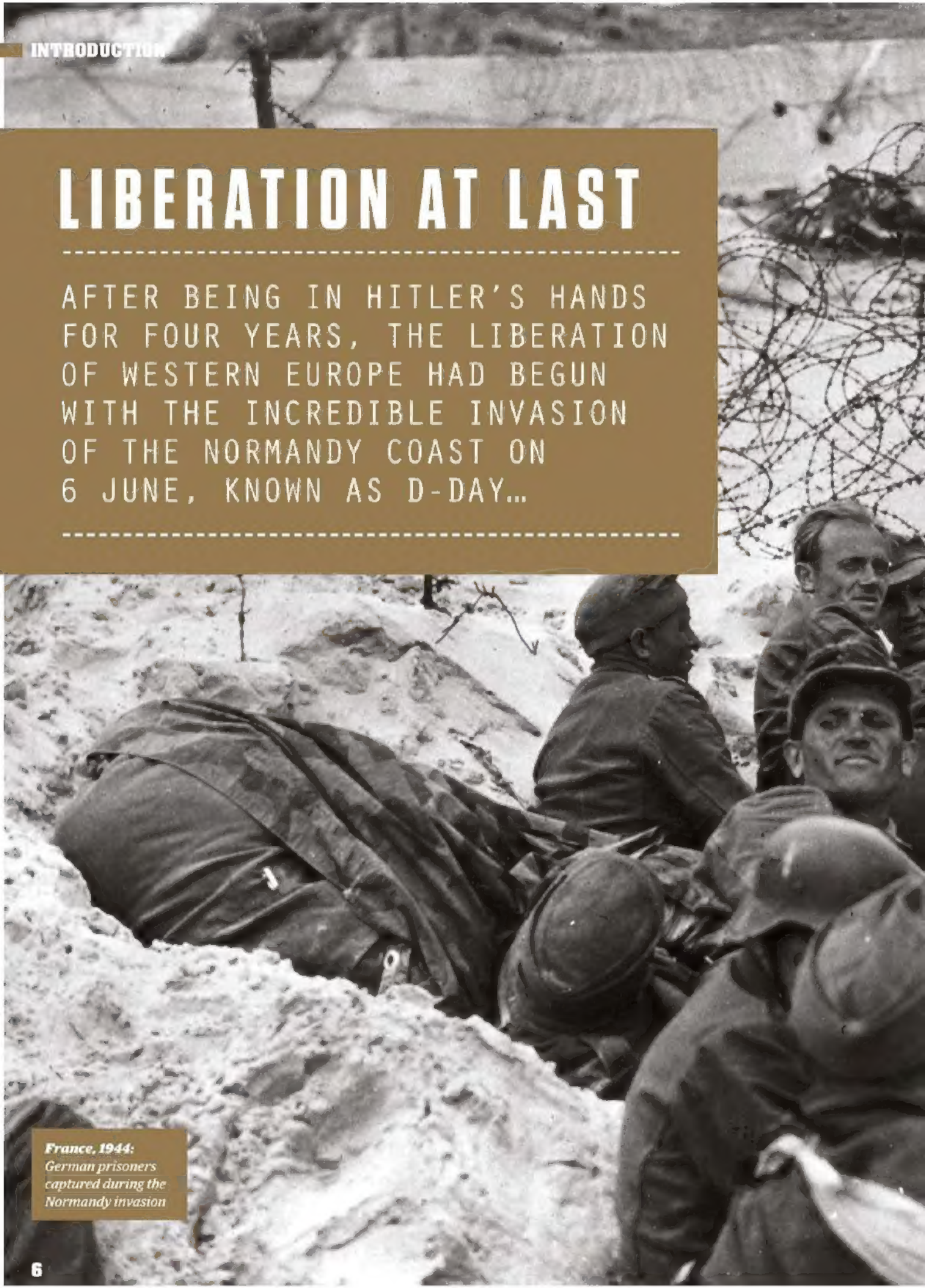
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# LIBERATION AT LAST

AFTER BEING IN HITLER'S HANDS FOR FOUR YEARS, THE LIBERATION OF WESTERN EUROPE HAD BEGUN WITH THE INCREDIBLE INVASION OF THE NORMANDY COAST ON 6 JUNE, KNOWN AS D-DAY...



**France, 1944:**  
*German prisoners  
captured during the  
Normandy invasion*









**France, 1944:** US Army jeeps and other vehicles drive through the ruins of Saint-Lo



IN THE CRUCIAL WEEKS  
THAT FOLLOWED THE  
ALLIES EXPANDED THE  
SHALLOW BEACHHEADS  
THEY'D FOUGHT SO HARD  
FOR, WITH MILLIONS OF  
SOLDIERS FLOODING INLAND  
TO TAKE THE WHOLE OF  
NORTHERN FRANCE

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## INTRODUCTION



**France, 1944:** French civilians and Allied soldiers celebrate on the Champs-Élysées



BY 15 AUGUST A SECOND  
INVASION WAS LAUNCHED  
IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE,  
CODENAMED OPERATION  
DRAGOON, FOLLOWED DAYS  
LATER BY THE PROPAGANDA  
TRIUMPH OF THE  
LIBERATION OF PARIS





## INTRODUCTION

**Eastern Bloc:** Soviet artillery  
battery in the Northern

farthest eastern point reached by  
Hitler's army during the war





# THE BEGINNING OF THE END?

TO SEAL VICTORY IN EUROPE, THE ALLIES  
NEEDED TO BUILD ON THE MOMENTUM  
CREATED BY THE INVASION OF NORMANDY

**B**y the summer of 1944 the Western Allies of the USA, Great Britain and Commonwealth forces were steadily advancing through France, with their sights firmly fixed on Nazi Germany itself. On the Eastern Front, the majority of the German Army was being bled to death by the vengeance of the Red Army.

Following the triumphant defences of Moscow and Stalingrad and the crucial victory at the battle of the Kursk, the forces of the Soviet Union were brutally rolling back the advances made by the Germans during the initial thrust of Barbarossa in 1941. Slowly but surely, the Allies were winning the war. The only question was when victory would come.

Despite superior numbers and overwhelming air superiority, the Western Allies' advance from the Normandy beaches was slow and bloody. Throughout the war, the German soldier had proved himself to be without equal, and backed by the awesome power of the Panther and Tiger tanks that easily outgunned their Allied equivalents, the Wehrmacht made the US, British and Canadian forces suffer for every village, field and hedge in North France. At times the struggle for the Normandy bocage was even worse than the harrowing scenes of carnage on Omaha beach, which the 1st and 29th US Infantry Divisions had fought so hard to take, almost matching the brutal fighting of the battlefields of World War I. As casualties mounted, a quick and decisive end to the war in Europe was desperately sought. ►





*The Big Three: Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill photographed at the Tehran Conference, 29 November 1943. The three leaders agreed that the Allies would open a second front against Germany.*

## THE RED THREAT

It wasn't just the mounting casualties in France that made it imperative to end the war with Germany as soon as possible. The Pacific theatre of war was proving just as bitter, with victory seemingly a long way off against the dogged Japanese, who were

IT WAS IMPERATIVE  
THAT THE WESTERN  
ALLIES REACHED  
BERLIN FIRST  
AND MAINTAINED  
ENOUGH STRENGTH  
TO OPPOSE SOVIET  
EXPANSION

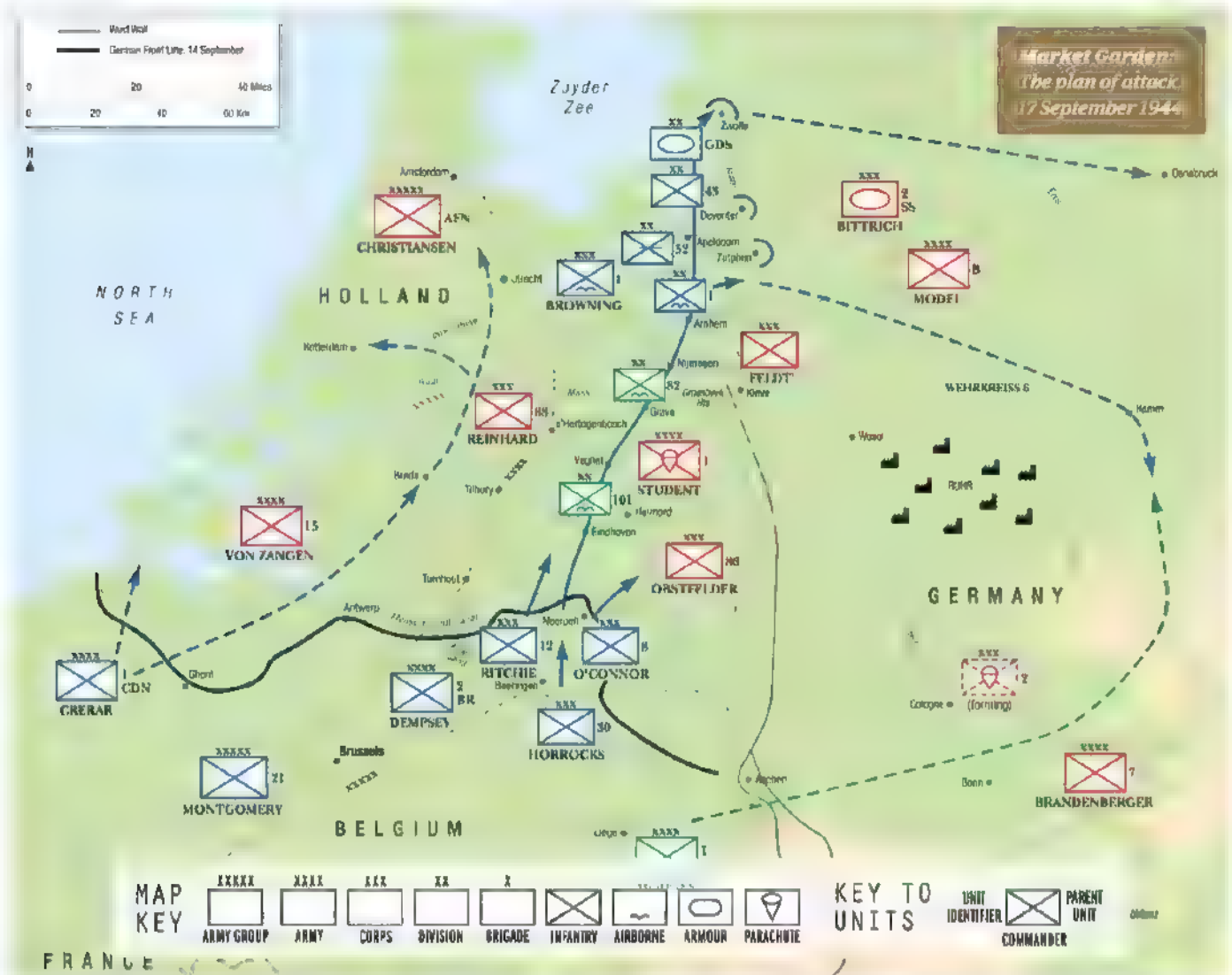
intent on fighting to the last. The toll of fighting on so many fronts was becoming painfully clear, both in terms of manpower and economically. But there was another key motivation for reaching the heart of the Third Reich quickly: the Red Army. Though they were fighting the same enemy, there were few in Washington DC or London who would count the Soviet Union as a friend. In particular, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had a venomous distrust of the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, chiefly his brutal form of Communist dictatorship that had seen millions of his own people murdered, starved or imprisoned in the run up to World War II.

Discussions had taken place at the Tehran Conference at the end of 1943 between Churchill, Stalin and US President Franklin D Roosevelt, concerning the proposal of a second front in Europe, as well as what would become

of Europe after the war. Churchill's fear was that the strength of the Red Army and Stalin's conviction would see the Communist government's plans for Eastern Europe spread further afield. For Churchill, it was imperative that the Western Allies reached Berlin first, ended the war quickly, and still had enough strength left in Europe to oppose any expansion from the Soviets.

By the first week of September, British forces on the northern flank of the Allied advance were well into Belgium. They liberated Antwerp on 4 September, with the Germans unsuccessfully trying to deprive the British of the port by attempting to destroy it using V1 flying bombs and V2 rockets, which instead caused massive damage to the city. The crucial ports of Dieppe, which had been disastrously attacked in 1943, and La Havre were also taken at a cost, helping to alleviate some of the supply problems





the Allies had encountered since D-Day. Meanwhile, other more heavily defended ports along the French coast, such as the symbolic Dunkirk, were left alone.

To the south, the American 12th Army Group under General Omar Bradley was advancing towards the German border from Paris, while the 6th made rapid progress up from the south through Vichy France and on to Germany under General John Devers. What stood in their way was the Rhine, the great river that marked both a symbolic and geographical boundary of Germany, and the formidable line of German defences called the Siegfried Line. As the Americans would find over the next few months, especially around the Hürtgen Forest on the Belgian border, the defences would prove a tough nut to crack. Up until that point the Allies had relied on speed to push the German forces further and further back to their

homeland. Now, with supplies stretched thin and the imposing barrier in their way, a plan was needed for Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight Eisenhower to lead his forces into Germany, and end the war.

The man Eisenhower turned to was Bernard Montgomery, the daring British general that had spectacularly led his troops to victory at the Battle of El Alamein in Egypt two years before, turning the tide of war for the British. Though greatly respected, his maverick style had seen the more pragmatic Eisenhower given overall command of the Allies from D-Day onwards. Now, he saw a chance to show his quality with an audacious plan to advance through the Netherlands and Germany by taking a series of bridges, outflanking the Siegfried Line. Relying on the speed of advancing tanks over the bridges secured by tens of thousands of airborne

GENERAL MONTGOMERY HAD AN AUDACIOUS PLAN TO ADVANCE THROUGH GERMANY BY OUTFLANKING THE DEFENSIVE SIEGFRIED LINE

troops, the plan wasn't without its risks. But if successful, it would open up the road to Berlin and hopefully bring an end to the war by Christmas. Montgomery's plan was soon agreed and put into action, under the moniker Operation Market Garden. ■













# MARKET FORCES

**T**he plan was as simple as it was bold. Thirty thousand Allied troops were to be dropped behind enemy lines, tasked with capturing the bridges crossing the canals and rivers along the border between Holland and Germany (the 'Market' part of the operation). Meanwhile, British infantry and tank units would hammer their way to these bridges from the Allied lines, crossing the Rhine into Germany ('Garden').

German forces were already being pushed back out of France and Belgium

following the D-Day landings, but as the Allies neared the German borders, resistance intensified. The Allied forces were stretched over a very broad front, which was becoming increasingly difficult to supply. Could a single, narrow push into Germany's industrial heartland finally break Hitler's resolve? Field Marshal Montgomery conceived Operation Market Garden with exactly this in mind. Had it worked, it could have brought the war to an end by Christmas 1944. Instead, it turned into what some have described as 'Hitler's last victory'. ■

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THE AIRCRAFT  
WAS A B-29  
SUPERFORTRESS  
BOMBER



## THE PLAN UNFURLS

GIVING THEMSELVES JUST ONE WEEK TO PREPARE,  
THE ALLIES HAD LITTLE TIME TO MAKE KEY DECISIONS...

**M**arket was the largest airborne military operation in history. The First Allied Airborne Army – formed just a month earlier in August 1944, to provide co-ordinated air operations – was to fly four of its six divisions into occupied Holland behind enemy lines, capturing key bridges across the Rhine and its tributaries and canals. These units would hold the bridges until the XXX Corps ground forces arrived. They were tasked with advancing 65 miles up Highway 69, the only road leading from Allied lines through to Eindhoven, Nijmegen and eventually Arnhem.

The British 1st Airborne Division, under Major General Roy Urquhart, and Brigadier General Stanislaw Sosabowski's Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade would take the bridges at Arnhem and Oosterbeek, the northernmost targets of the operation. They would also capture the Deelen airfield, which would be used to land infantry units later in the operation. This was expected to prove the hardest part of the plan.

#### THE PLAN UNFURLS

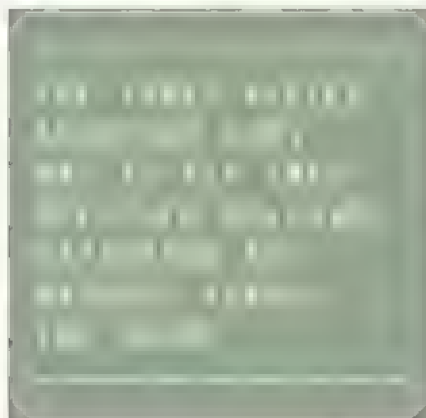
Sixty-five miles inside enemy territory, Arnhem was the furthest battle zone from the advancing XXX Corps, and must therefore wait the longest to be relieved by the ground troops. But the 1st Airborne was itching for a fight. The Division had been held in reserve during the Normandy landings and never used, and while plans had been made to deploy it in France or Belgium, the German lines collapsed too quickly for the 1st Airborne to be dropped behind them. Frustration set in. As glider commander Major Ian Toler noted in his diary, "Order, counter order and disorder are the order of the day. We just sit back and laugh, as always."

The American 82nd Airborne Division, commanded by Brigadier General James M Gavin, was to take the bridges across

the river Maas at Grave and over the Waal at Nijmegen, the latter being an especially important target. These were around 40 miles inside enemy-held territory. It was also deemed essential that the Groesbeek Heights, a 300-foot-high plateau (and the highest point in the Netherlands), should be taken. The Heights extended almost into Germany, and as well as giving a tactical advantage, occupying them would protect the bridges against a counter-attack from German tanks that the Dutch resistance had reported on the other side of the border.

Two regiments of the 82nd Airborne were to drop on the Heights, with a third landing near Overasselt on the river Maas, with one company dropping west of the Grave bridge, south of the river. One regiment (the 508th) would move northwest from the Heights to Nijmegen, with the other (the 505th) moving west to fan out and block the road before linking up with the 508th again. Gavin had no complaints about his orders, though in hindsight he felt the importance of the Groesbeek Heights was overstated.

Major General Maxwell D Taylor's 101st Airborne, another American division, would take the bridges at Son and Veghel, near Eindhoven at the southern end of the operations zone, as well as a number of smaller river







Workers on the ship's deck handle large coils of rope. The rope is used for the ship's rigging and is made by Plymouth Cordage Co. in New Bedford, Mass.

and canal crossings. Taylor also decided to take the road and rail bridges at Best, over the Wilhelmina Canal, to provide an alternative route up the road for the ground troops should the bridge at Son be damaged or destroyed. At only 20 miles inside enemy lines, this would be the area where the XXX Corps would first meet up with the airborne forces.

The original plan was for the 101st to be dropped at seven locations covering 30 miles from just south of Eindhoven to the north of Uden. Taylor disliked this idea, fearing his forces would be too scattered to be effective, especially given the difficulty of landing so many men with any degree of accuracy. Instead, two landing zones were used, and Eindhoven relegated to a secondary target with no troops landing south of the Son bridge. Disputes about the landing zones meant plans for the 101st Airborne Division were finalised very late. The paratroopers' briefing also seemed rushed, and quick-release parachute harnesses were only issued at the last minute before take-off.

In all, over 34,600 troops would be delivered by the airdrop. More than 14,500 were to be flown in by glider, with over 20,000 dropped by parachute. The gliders would also carry some 1,700 vehicles and 263 pieces of artillery, as well as supplies.

The plan was a daring one, especially from a meticulous man like Montgomery. But he had a point to prove. Despite his recent promotion from General to Field Marshal, he had lost control of the Allied land forces in Europe to General Eisenhower, and the two men disagreed on how the push into Germany should be accomplished.

Ike favoured a broad, widespread attack, pushing the Germans back step by step. Montgomery felt this approach was too slow and allowed the enemy to regroup, shore up its defences and force the Allies to fight for every inch of ground. Instead, he preferred a single attack on an enemy weak point, striking into the heart of Germany. As he wrote to Eisenhower in early September, "One really powerful and full-blooded thrust towards Berlin is likely to get there and thus end the German war... If we attempt a compromise solution and split our resources so no thrust is full-blooded, we will prolong the war." Operation Market Garden was to be this thrust.

*Continued on page 26* ▶







THE B-29 SUPERFORTRESS WAS THE  
LARGEST AND MOST ADVANCED  
BOMBING PLANE IN THE WORLD  
AT THE TIME. IT WAS DESIGNED  
TO BE A STRATEGIC BOMBING  
PLANE, CAPABLE OF REACHING  
ANY PART OF THE WORLD.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA







*Continued from page 22*

Since America supplied most of the troops and aircraft for Operation Market Garden, Eisenhower appointed US Lieutenant General Lewis Brereton as commander of the First Allied Airborne Army. This didn't sit well with the British, who felt he lacked experience in airborne operations. His record as an air force commander was patchy, to boot. In December 1941, during the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, he lost most of his aircraft on the ground, though he achieved considerable successes leading the Ninth Air Force in Normandy.

At the first planning meeting, on 10 September 1944, it was decided the aircraft would take two routes to the drop zones, to avoid giving the enemy too large a target. The 1st and 82nd Airborne Divisions were to fly over the Scheldt islands, from the west of the target zone, and the 101st would follow a more southerly route, mostly flying over Allied territory. Brereton also demanded that when a decision had been made, it was not to be changed.

A key logistical limitation was the huge quantity of personnel and equipment that had to be flown to the drop zones. Although the USAAF and RAF had almost 1,500 C-47 Dakota transporter planes, they were to be used as both paratrooper transporters and glider tugs, and they couldn't do both at once. Only 60 per cent of the initial ground force could be dropped in a single lift. The division commanders all felt it was best to run two drops in one day, delivering troops to target areas as quickly as possible and maintaining the element of surprise that's vital to airborne operations. But Major General Paul Williams, Brereton's Air Commander, felt inexperienced pilots, rushed repairs and crew fatigue would lead to unacceptable casualties. Also, two drops in a day would require night – or at least twilight – flying, something the crews weren't trained for. Brereton supported Williams.

## EARLY CONCERNS

It was decided that 90 per cent of the American transporters would drop paratroopers on the first day, with the same number towing gliders on the second. The RAF's 164 Dakotas were used mostly as glider tugs. On the operation's opening day, two brigades of the 1st Airborne would be flown in, along with its artillery and specialised units. Three parachute regiments of the US 82nd and

101st Airborne Divisions would drop, and the Airborne Corps HQ would be flown in. On the second day, the rest of 1st Airborne would be flown in, and the 82nd would get its artillery support. An infantry regiment would be glidered in to reinforce the 101st, and each division would be bolstered by supporting troops.

Sosabowski's 1st Parachute Brigade would arrive on the third day, as would infantry reinforcements for the 82nd and artillery for the 101st. After more equipment and units arrived on the fifth day, with the advancing XXX Corps, the British 52nd Lowland (Air Portable) Division would be flown in on the sixth, landing at a captured airport, probably Deelen.

Although glad to be going into action after many cancelled operations, Urquhart wasn't entirely happy with the plans. He (and many others) felt the 1st Airborne's landing zones were too far from Arnhem, though the RAF's planners argued they couldn't be any closer due to German flak and marshy ground that was unsuitable for gliders. Wireless operator Leo Hall voiced concerns about whether the radios they'd been given had the range to operate effectively, a fear that became only too real during the operation. But there was no time to argue.

No one expected much resistance from the Luftwaffe, as the Allies enjoyed comprehensive air superiority, though





LIEUTENANT  
GENERAL  
FREDERICK  
BROWNING TO  
FIELD MARS  
MONTGOMERY  
"I THINK WE MAY  
BE GOING A  
BRIDGE TOO FAR"

flak from anti-aircraft units on the ground was anticipated. In the event, the planners were right on both counts. But they were badly wrong in their assessment of the German forces. Only 'third rate' troops were believed to be in the area, but this was far from true. The Allies also did the Dutch resistance a great disservice.

As the field of operations was so near the German border, many believed there'd be a lot of Nazi sympathisers among civilians, but this wasn't the case. The ferry between Driel and Heaveadorp wasn't mentioned during the planning stages. Large enough to carry eight vehicles, it could have been a boon to the Allied

forces in the Arnhem area had it been secured, but it wasn't even considered.

Some officers thought the Allies were over-reaching themselves. Deputy commander of the First Allied Airborne Army, Lieutenant General Frederick Browning, is said to have told Montgomery "I think we may be going a bridge too far". This quote is unconfirmed, but it was used as the title of Cornelius Ryan's 1974 book about Market Garden and the 1977 film.

But perhaps the biggest planning error was to allow only one week for all of Operation Market Garden's preparation, giving no time for extra training and intelligence gathering. ■





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## OPERATIONS BEGIN

## AS GLIDERS AND TRANSPORTER PLANES TOOK TO THE SKIES, THE AMERICANS LED THE WAY TO GERMANY

**T**he first drop went as planned: almost all the troops landed in their intended zones, with very little opposition. At the southern end of the target area, 6,769 members of the 101st US Airborne Division landed between 1pm and 1.30pm, mostly without incident.

There were very few casualties and little lost equipment, though one in four C-47 Dakotas were damaged and 16 were lost. The gliders landed an hour later, but were not as successful. Of the 70 gliders that took off, only 53 delivered their load, although they landed 80 per cent of their men and 75 per cent of their equipment.

From their drop zones, the men of the 101st were to march both north and south, taking a series of bridges between the town of Veghel in the north and the city of Eindhoven in the south, and also secure this stretch of Highway 69 ahead of the advancing XXX Corps.

## SECURING THE ZONES

The 502nd and 506th landed close to Son. The 502nd, under Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Cassidy, secured the landing zone for the arrival of the 327th Glider Regiment the following day. Its 1st Battalion was sent through Sint-Oedenrode, taking and securing the road bridge over the river Dommel at the southern end of the town.

Two battalions of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), commanded by Colonel Robert Sink, advanced in a pincer movement to the bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal near Son. Nearing the bridge, they ran into three 88mm anti-tank guns and mortars on the northern bank. The 1st Battalion advanced through the forest, but was taking casualties. After trying and failing to neutralise the anti-tank guns with machine gun fire, the troops fixed bayonets and charged, over-running the first two German

gunners' positions. The 2nd Battalion had advanced through the town and took out the third 88mm with a bazooka.

However, the German artillery had bought time for their demolition crews to place charges under the bridge. As the 506th approached, the bridge exploded, cutting off their path south to Eindhoven. To make matters worse, two minor canal bridges had also been destroyed. The vulnerabilities in Operation Market Garden's planning were becoming clear – even minor enemy action could cause huge delays. Luckily, the main bridge wasn't totally destroyed, and the 101st's engineers spent the next few hours on makeshift repairs with the help of Dutch civilians, using scavenged timber. They also built a raft for the vehicles.

The canal was crossed by 2,000 troops who then moved south, planning to meet up with the Irish Guards at the head of the XXX Corps advancing up Highway 69, at around 8pm. As no radio operators had arrived with the first lift, there was no communication between these forces. With light fading and the weather turning, Colonel Sink halted his southerly advance at Bokt.

The 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment was dropped close to Veghel, and tasked

*Continued on page 34*

VULNERABILITIES IN  
MARKET GARDEN'S  
PLANNING WERE  
BECOMING CLEAR.  
EVEN MINOR ENEMY  
ACTION COULD  
CAUSE HUGE DELAYS







OPERATIONS BEGIN

U.S. Strategic Bombing  
Operations in the Pacific  
The B-29 Superfortress  
was the only aircraft  
capable of carrying  
enough bombs to destroy  
the Japanese home islands.

Reproduction



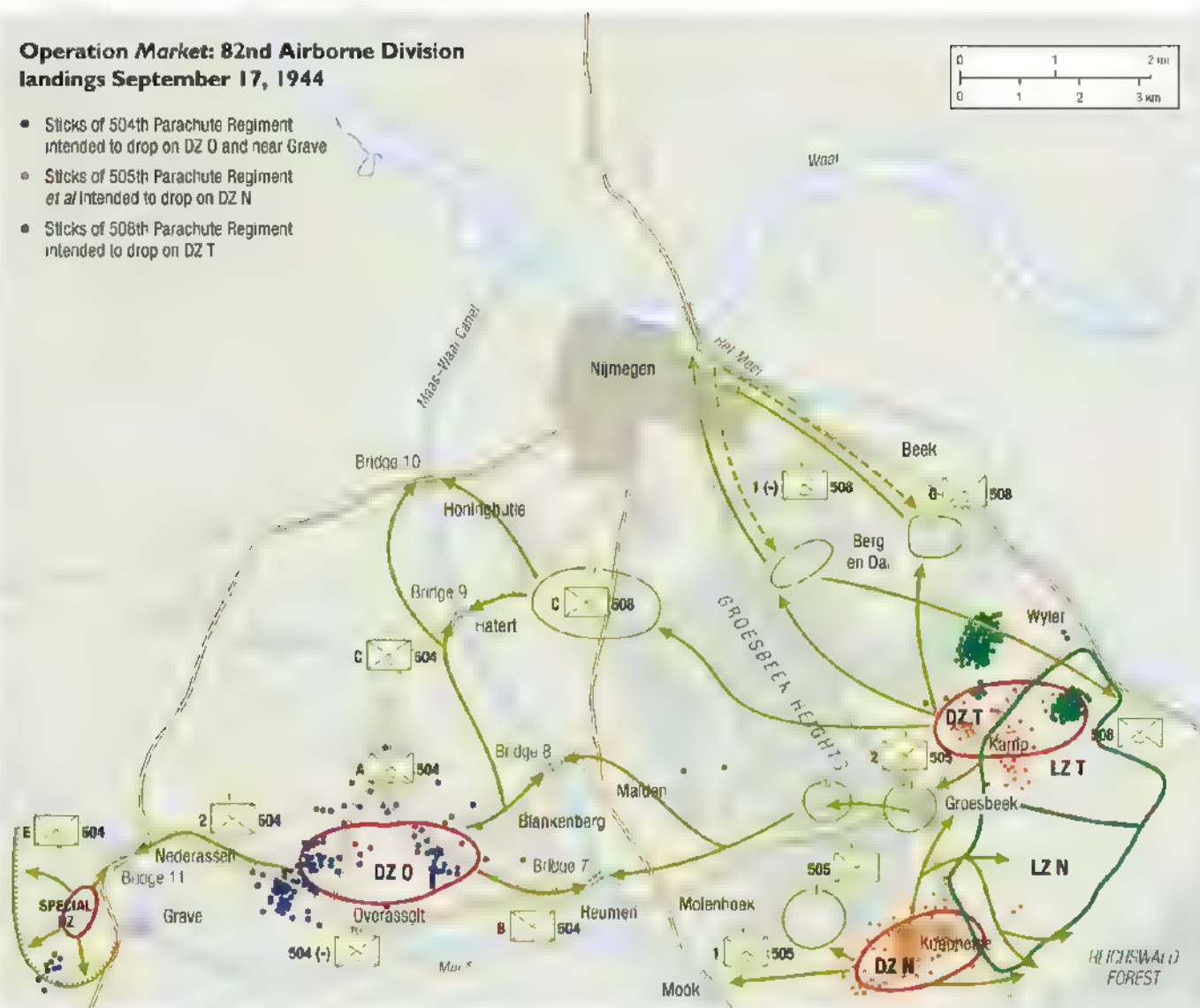
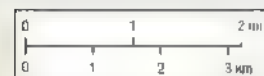




**Airborne assault:** Parachutes open overhead as waves of paratroopers land in Holland.

## Operation Market: 82nd Airborne Division landings September 17, 1944

- Sticks of 504th Parachute Regiment intended to drop on DZ O and near Grave
- Sticks of 505th Parachute Regiment intended to drop on DZ N
- Sticks of 508th Parachute Regiment intended to drop on DZ T



Continued from page 30  
with securing a series of four road and rail bridges at the town. These bridges crossed both the Aa river and the Zuid Willemsvaart Canal that runs parallel with it, and were of vital importance. They were speedily taken, with the only casualties being eight injuries sustained during the jump.

### A PROMISING START

Brigadier General Jim Gavin's 82nd Airborne Division, who dropped further north along Highway 69, got off to a good start: 7,467 men landed, with 89 per cent of the troops and 84 per cent of the gliders landing within 1,000 metres of their intended zones. This was an excellent achievement, contrasting well with previous drops that (unlike Market's) were at night, where units were landed with much less accuracy

As expected, Allied air supremacy meant there were no Luftwaffe attacks though 'heavy but inaccurate' flak caused light damage. Gavin himself, however, was injured. On parachuting in, he landed on a pavement instead of grass and hurt his back. He had it checked by a doctor a few days later and was told he was fine but, five years on, a second examination showed he'd actually fractured two discs. Meanwhile, the Germans were massing in the west. Two 'march battalions' were formed from the several thousand trainee paratroopers in 's-Hertogenbosch, just 15 miles from the 101st's nearest drop zones. One marched on Veghel and the other to Sint Oedenrode, where they captured 46 airborne troops from the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment at Kameren. Artillery and infantry launched counter-attacks on Allied positions on the Wilhelmina Canal. They did little damage at this

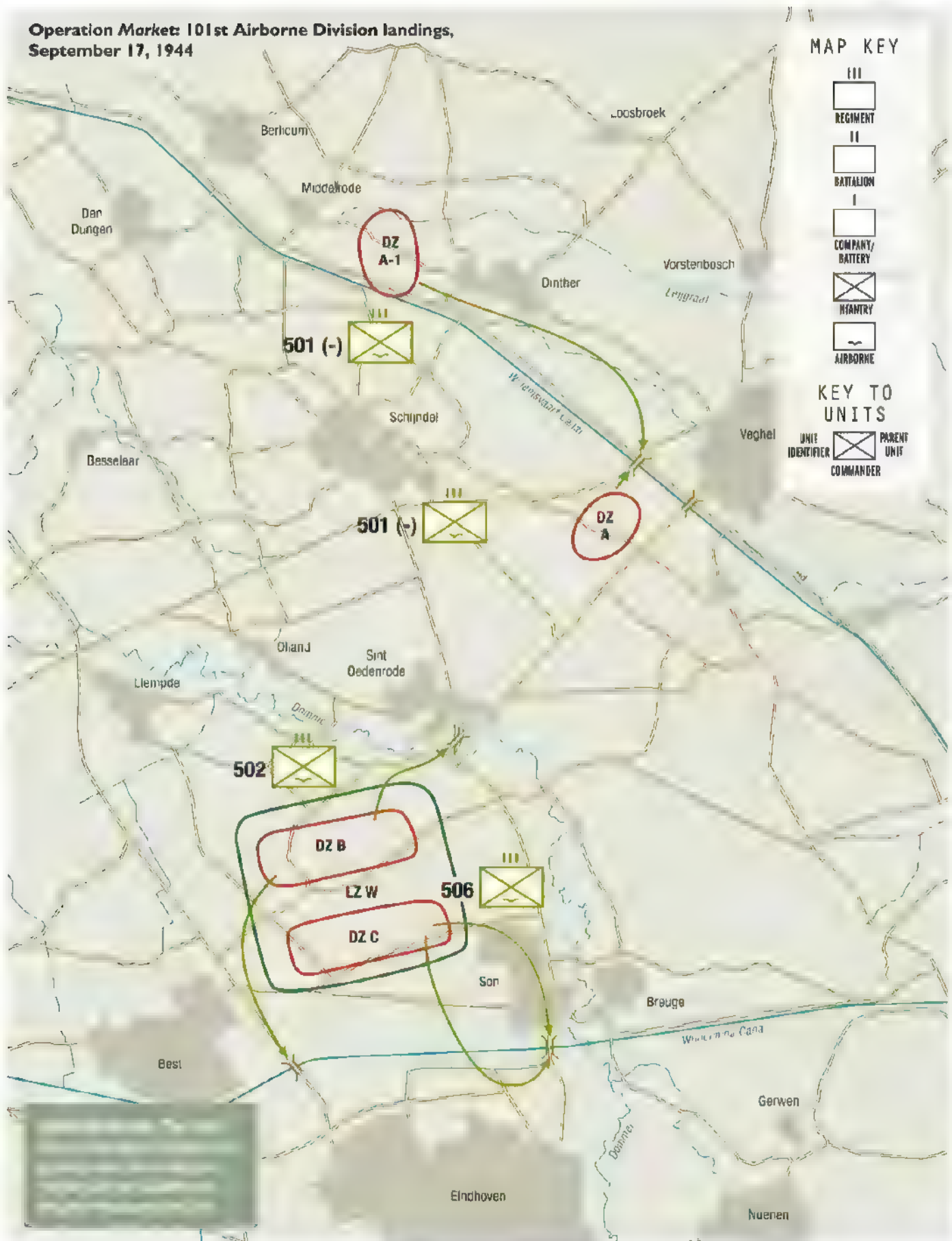
**ABOVE 82nd Airborne:** Although securing the high ground at Groesbeek Heights was a priority, the key objective for the 82nd was surely taking the road bridge at Nijmegen.

stage, and showed scant understanding of the Allied battle plans, but they proved how vulnerable the operation was to rapid enemy response.

The main priorities of the 82nd Airborne were to take the bridge across the river Maas at Grave, to secure the road and rail bridges over the river Waal at Nijmegen, and also secure two minor crossings over the canal connecting the Maas and the Waal. In addition, they had to secure the Groesbeek Heights, denying the high ground to German observers and preventing an attack from Reichswald in the east. To this ▶



**Operation Market: 101st Airborne Division landings,  
September 17, 1944**







end, much of the 82nd was dropped on the Heights, despite Gavin's initial preference for dropping troops as close to the bridges as possible. This would have resulted in higher initial casualties but facilitated a speedy capture. However, due to the importance of the Division holding on to the central section of the highway as well as capturing the bridges, the plateau was deemed of prime importance.

The Grave bridge was captured very quickly when a plane containing 16 troops from the 504th PIR overshot its drop zone to the west of the town and landed closer than was intended. Their commander, Lieutenant John S Thompson, pressed forward instead of waiting for his comrades, seeing off all opposition until they reached the bridge, which was defended at either end by 20mm light anti-aircraft guns atop makeshift towers.

The Americans attacked the tower at the southern end of the bridge first. By the time they were spotted, they were so close the Germans couldn't aim their guns – which were set up with anti-aircraft measures in mind – low enough to target them. Three bazooka rounds cleared the tower. After destroying what they believed was equipment used to detonate demolition charges, they turned the captured gun – which was still in working order – on the northern tower. The bridge was secured.

A battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William Harrison attacked the bridges on the canal linking the Maas and the Waal. Striking quickly, and keeping the German defenders under heavy fire to stop them planting explosives, the Moelenhoek bridge was taken intact. Unfortunately, two others across the canal at Malden and Hatert were destroyed.

The 505th and 508th regiments secured the Groesbeek Heights without incident too. The next task was for Lieutenant Colonel Roy Lindquist to

move the 508th to Nijmegen and take the 2,000-foot-long road bridge there. This was arguably the 82nd Airborne's most important objective. Some of the narrower sections of rivers and canals could be bridged by Allied engineers if the troops failed to capture the existing bridges intact. But bridges at Nijmegen and Arnhem crossed broad sections of the Rhine and could not easily be replaced. Without the bridge at Nijmegen, when the XXX Corps arrived they would stand little chance of quickly proceeding north to meet up with the British at Arnhem.

Yet even though the Groesbeek Heights had been taken, satisfying an order from Browning who insisted no attempt should be made to capture the Nijmegen bridge until the Heights were secure, the 508th didn't make a move for seven hours. This delay gave the Germans a chance to react. Instead of facing a token guard, as they would have done had they attacked earlier, by the time the 508th reached the bridge it had been reinforced by troops from the 9th SS Reconnaissance Battalion. Led by SS Captain Viktor Graebner, the Battalion had been seen moving south through Arnhem, over the very bridge the British had been tasked with capturing. An important opportunity to strike early had been lost.

Near Nijmegen, Lieutenant Colonel Shields Warren's 2nd Battalion was split. A platoon was sent to see how well the bridge was defended, but it couldn't report in due to radio failure. F Company advanced towards the road bridge. They reached a roundabout near the railway station, but were stopped by a well-placed SS machine gun team, which scattered the company and pinned them down. An equally well-placed American grenade silenced the machine gun.

A patrol went northwest and destroyed a control tower that was believed to house German demolition equipment to be used on the bridges if their capture seemed likely. Dutch civilians guided A and B Companies through the town, towards the southern approach to a bridge over the river Waal. They ran into the 9th SS Reconnaissance Battalion near the ruins of an old castle. Again, their presence was announced by a burst of machine gun fire, taking casualties and scattering the rest of the troops. The two companies tried to advance once more, but they were beaten back by mortars, machine guns and grenades. More casualties were taken.

THE GERMANS ENJOYED AN INTELLIGENCE COUP: ORDERS OUTLINING MARKET GARDEN PLANS WERE FOUND ON THE BODY OF AN AMERICAN OFFICER

Despite some fierce fighting, including bayonet charges, attack after attack was repulsed, and the light was fading. Brigadier General Gavin decided that taking the bridge while also guarding the landing zones would not be possible. He recalled Warren and waited for reinforcements.

In the years since Operation Market Garden, much has been made of an apparent misunderstanding between Gavin and Lindquist about how rapidly the 508th should have progressed to the bridge. In response to an information request from a military historian dated 25 July 1945, Gavin stated, "About 48 hours prior to take-off, when the entire plan appeared to be shaping up well, I personally directed Colonel Lindquist, commanding the 508th Parachute Infantry, to commit his first battalion against the Nijmegen bridge without delay after landing, but to keep a very close watch on it in the event he needed it to protect himself against the Reichswald." But in his 1947 book 'Airborne Warfare' he said, "Just before take-off, I discussed the situation with Colonel Lindquist and directed him to commit not more than one battalion to the seizure of the Nijmegen bridges as soon as possible after landing, so as to take advantage of both surprise and darkness", which is far less clear. Whichever version is correct, the failure to capture the bridges at Nijmegen on the first day of Operation Market Garden was to prove crucial in the week to come.

The Germans enjoyed an important intelligence coup when they searched a glider shot down near the Dutch coast, on route to Nijmegen. Written orders outlining part of the Operation Market Garden plans were found on the body of an American officer, who should not have taken such a document into battle. Allied intentions soon became clear; ▶

"A LITTLE GERMAN ARMOUR WAS REPORTED TO BE REFITTING IN THE ARNHEM AREA..."

REPORTED TO BE





# ALLIED COMMANDERS OF WORLD WAR II

**M**ajor General Richard Gale, 1st Airborne Division, NW Europe, 1944 (1). Gale spent much of his career in staff appointments but was highly influential in the formative years of British airborne troops. He commanded the first battalion and subsequently the first brigade of British paratroops; did much background work on this type of operation, including the evolution of RAF bases; and led 6th Airborne Division into victorious battle in Normandy in June 1944. He held senior airborne staff appointments during the Arnhem operation and the Rhine crossings, and before his final retirement served both as Commander in Chief of the British Rhine Army and Deputy Supreme Commander Europe. A photo shows him wearing this rather eccentric combination of a Devonian smock with Bedford cord breeches and ankle boots. The smock has the knitted collar lining popular with senior officers. The general officer's cap badge is worn on his maroon paratrooper's beret. The only other insignia are forget patches on the BD (battle dress) blouse.

Major General Matthew B Ridgway, GOC US 18th Airborne Corps, NW Europe, winter 1944 (2). After a succession of staff appointments, Ridgway served first as a deputy commander and later as commander of the US 82nd Airborne Division. Badly mauled in the Sicily invasion, the 82nd achieved fame in Normandy in June 1944 when it was dropped in darkness to secure the areas inland of Utah Beach. Badly scattered in the landings around Sainte-Mère-Eglise, and with most heavy equipment gone during the All American Division's fight for its survival. Under these

trained circumstances, and with the Wehrmacht just 400 yards from his HQ, Ridgway made his famous signal "Short 60 per cent infantry, 90 per cent artillery, combat efficiency excellent". By 10am on D-Day his paratroopers had successfully linked up with the seaborne invasion units. Given the task of forming an airborne corps in late 1944, Ridgway fought in the Ardennes and at the Rhine crossings. He later commanded US forces in Korea, still wearing the grenade on his webbing that had become his trademark.

He was photographed in the Ardennes wearing a steel helmet with painted stars, a light OD (olive drab) jeep coat with added shoulder straps bearing ranking and what seems to be the green unit commander's side OD wool socks and jump-boots. His webbing comprises belt, braces, cap pouches, first aid pouch and canteen carrier, with a holstered .45.

Major General James M Gavin, GOC US 82nd Airborne Division, Holland, September 1944 (3). "Jumpin' Jim" Gavin, America's youngest general at 37, took over this division from Ridgway after serving as his deputy in Normandy. He led it in the capture of the Waal and Maas bridges during Operation Market Garden; his energy and effectiveness apparently unimpaired by two cracked vertebrae sustained in the drop but undiagnosed until late in a agonising injury.

Photographed at Grave during the operation, he wears a uniform distinguishable from that of any private in his division only by the stars on his helmet and shoulder strap. A small US quick-identification flag is worn on the right shoulder and the divisional patch on the left. He wears minimal web equipment and carries a German M1.

it was a familiar plan after all, and very similar to what the Germans had done when invading Holland four years earlier. The plans were reported to Field Marshal Walter Model, the commander-in-chief of the German Army in the West.

But although the orders gave a good overview of the Allied plans, little use was made of their specifics. After the success of the British Operation Mincemeat, where fake and misleading 'top secret' documents were planted on the corpse of a man dressed as a Royal Marine officer, another disinformation exercise was suspected. Although genuine, the orders found in Holland were treated with scepticism.

## EXPERIENCED ENEMY

Prussian-born Model was a master of defensive strategy, excellent at counter-attacking and a brilliant motivator of troops. He proved his worth on the Eastern Front, where his unshakeable self belief and superb leadership did much to slow the advance of Stalin's army. Hitler then moved him to the Western Front, tasking him with doing the same to the British and American advance in Europe. Model had every intention of doing just that.

The signed orders pulled from the downed glider weren't Model's only stroke of luck. He was also fortunate to have two highly trained SS Panzer Divisions to hand. The 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions, under the command of Lieutenant General Wilhelm Bittrich, had arrived on 5 September, having been in constant action in Normandy since late June. Model had set them to rest and refit in Arnhem and Eindhoven, not in anticipation of Operation Market Garden, but believing them to be relatively safe German-held areas.

The Allies were not completely unaware of these Divisions – they'd been spotted by a photo-reconnaissance Spitfire XI and reported by the Dutch resistance – but their significance was played down. As Corporal Bob Allen put it, "A little German armour was reputed to be refitting in the Arnhem area. But morale was sky high. Most of us were straining at the leash to get into battle."

Although the Divisions were down to 6,000-7,000 men (20-30 per cent of their original strength), they were very experienced and an invaluable asset to the defending German forces. The Allies had expected to face only third-rate troops, but were in fact up against crack armoured units and a very capable enemy commander. ■





# THE BRITISH LAND

## OPTIMISM WAS HIGH AS THE BRITISH TROOPS FOLLOWED THEIR US ALLIES INTO THE NETHERLANDS

**T**he British 1st Airborne had the trickiest job in Operation Market Garden. Its target, Arnhem, was deepest into enemy territory and, perhaps more significantly, the furthest along Highway 69, and would therefore be the last to be relieved by the advancing ground troops. Not that this left the troops disheartened.

The 1st Airborne hadn't been deployed for a while and the men were restless. The Division had missed out on the Normandy landings when the 6th was dropped and the 1st kept in reserve, and various schemes to drop it behind enemy lines in France or Belgium came to nothing when the front lines moved back too quickly, overtaking its deployment plans.

In the last three months, the 1st Airborne, commanded by Major General Roy Urquhart, had been on the brink of going into action 16 times, only for its deployment to be cancelled, usually because the target had already been overrun by the Allies. The troops were training intensively for an operation, sometimes getting as far as boarding the planes, only to see it cancelled once again. Frustration was setting in. As pathfinder paratrooper Sergeant Roy Kent put it, "The suspense was killing us. The only fighting we were getting was with the Yanks in the pubs of Salisbury, Newark and Huddersfield."


Despite the intensive training the Division underwent for previous ▶

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AND NEWARK."  
SERGEANT ROY KENT



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missions, it got very little advance warning of the Arnhem drop. Major General Urquhart was only told of the plans for Operation Market Garden on 10 September, just a week before it was to begin, and he was only able to brief his NCOs two days after that. Although not entirely happy with the battle plans (specifically, he felt the drops were too far from Arnhem), Urquhart was eager to go. The troops were keen too, though a little cynical after so many false starts. During one briefing, a wag called out "What's the betting we'll be in London on a pass tomorrow?", a reference to the 48-hour passes they were given after an aborted mission to compensate for the time spent cooped up in their barracks during the preparation. But the preparation went on. Maps and photographs were analysed, over and over again, leading one paratrooper to comment, "We felt as if we were almost natives of Arnhem." Each man was given five Dutch guilders in case they needed money in Holland, and even a few Deutschmarks.

#### AT THE ARNHEM

On 17 September, the mood among the Allies was optimistic. Despite heavy rain the previous night, the weather was clear and sunny, and the troops were eager to get started. If there were misgivings, they largely went unspoken. As Major Tony Hibbert put it, "If someone had offered to drop us in the middle of Berlin we'd have been as happy as sand boys." All the landings were planned for daylight. There was little moonlight, and large operations were forbidden in total darkness, so the airlift didn't start until the morning.

The departing aircraft were an impressive sight. As military historian Mike Rossiter put it, "The giant airborne armada formed three lines of aircraft one and a half miles apart and nearly 100 miles long. All along its route, people on the ground left their houses to look up at the huge stream of planes and gliders flying above their heads." In total, over 3,500 aircraft took off from airfields in the south of England during Operation Market Garden – an incredible feat of logistics.

Piloting a glider wasn't an easy task, and called for a great degree of co-operation with whoever was piloting the powered aircraft (tug) towing it. As glider pilot Louis Hagen wrote about a later drop, "It is hard physical labour flying a glider in the slipstream of another aircraft, but our tug pilot was very skilful in avoiding the hundreds of other planes heading for

Holland. He had to fly completely out of formation and at the wrong altitude to achieve that, but we encouraged him and praised him all the way."

For obvious reasons, after a glider pilot had landed his craft, he couldn't turn his plane around and fly back to Britain. Instead, they had to join the ground troops as soldiers. "We were flying infantrymen," as 27-year-old glider pilot Alan Kettleby put it. "You're on the ground, you're in enemy territory, but it's nothing to worry about. You go from a glider pilot to a fighting soldier, but that's what we were trained to do."

#### LOSING STRENGTH

The crossing wasn't without casualties. As Tom Carpenter, a sapper in the Royal Engineers recalled, a glider broke up over Somerset. The 20 troops inside fell 3,000 feet to their deaths. The bomber that was towing the glider then returned to base in Wiltshire and its crew drove to the spot where the glider had come down. As rear gunner Sergeant Wally Simpson said of the scene, "It looks like a matchbox that's been stepped on." Five gliders were forced to ditch in the sea, but their crews and passengers were rescued. In all, 36 gliders didn't make it to Arnhem, resulting in a severe depletion in the 1st Airborne's fighting strength.

The bulk of the air armada reached the target area at about 1:30pm, without serious incident. No planes or gliders were lost over the target area itself, leading to a very successful first landing. In total, 5,191 troops successfully parachuted or landed, but this was only about half of the Division. As a result, the battalions were smaller too, each consisting of between 550-600 men, and a few were even smaller. The gliders were landed first, followed by the parachute drop, which was completed not long after 2pm, with the









paratroopers assembled and ready to push out towards Arnhem.

The 2nd Parachute Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Frost, and the 3rd under Lieutenant Colonel JAC Fitch, left at 3pm. Their targets were three bridges across the Rhine: a rail bridge in the west at Oosterbeek, a road bridge further east in Arnhem and a pontoon bridge near that, which was believed to have been dismantled. The road bridge was the key prize.

The British had by far the hardest task in Operation Market Garden, so perhaps it's not surprising they failed to repeat the successes of their American allies. While the plan was for a battalion to be kept in reserve, and only push for the high ground if sufficient progress had been made on taking the bridges, it left before the situation at the bridges had been ascertained. Their plans were falling apart almost as soon as the operation had started.

#### CIVILIAN RELIEF

But if the operation wasn't going to plan, the Dutch were unaware. After more than four years of occupation, they were overjoyed to see the British. "Out in the street, people are singing and dancing," wrote Kate ter Horst, who would later be dubbed the 'Angel of Arnhem' for tending to wounded Allies. "Is this the long-awaited release from our misery? Can it be true?"

Sadly it wasn't. The Reconnaissance Squadron, under Major Freddie Gough, was sent ahead of the troops along with four jeeps full of engineers. The plan was that the engineers would destroy demolition charges the Germans had placed along the bridges, and the squadron would hold the position until reinforcements arrived. Its departure was delayed due to the engineers landing at a different drop zone, forcing Gough ▶

"OUT IN THE STREET, PEOPLE ARE SINGING AND DANCING. IS THIS THE LONG-AWAITED RELEASE FROM OUR MISERY?"  
KATE TER HORST, DUTCH CIVILIAN



to leave without them. His request for light tanks was denied, and he was sent along the northernmost of three routes to the bridge – which proved to be where German defences were strongest. After losing two jeeps to heavy fire, the squadron retreated.

The 1st Parachute Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel David Dobie, made slow progress. On meeting the returning Reconnaissance Squadron and being told about the defences, Dobie turned his troops north, intending to out-flank the German position. This confused German intelligence, who wondered if the British were heading for the airfield at Deelen.

After a few skirmishes (including one that killed the German Commandant of Arnhem, Major General Friedrich Kussin), the 3rd Battalion ran into trouble at around 5:30pm. C Company, under Major RPC 'Pongo' Lewis, was detached and sent to the bridge by an alternative route. He arrived there with around 45 troops later that day. Under the orders of Brigadier Lathbury, who had arrived from the 2nd Battalion, the rest of the battalion then halted. This was a bewildering decision, given the need for speed, but the battalion didn't move again until 4:30am the next day.

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Naturally, the Germans weren't idle during the Allied advance. The Reconnaissance Battalion of SS Captain Viktor Eberhard Graebner's 9th SS Panzer Division was dispatched to scout the area between Arnhem and Nijmegen. It crossed the Arnhem road bridge with around 30 vehicles between 6pm and 7pm, under the watchful eye of the British, who had arrived but were tied down by German defences in the town. Even at that time, around five hours after the landing, the bridge had not been secured.

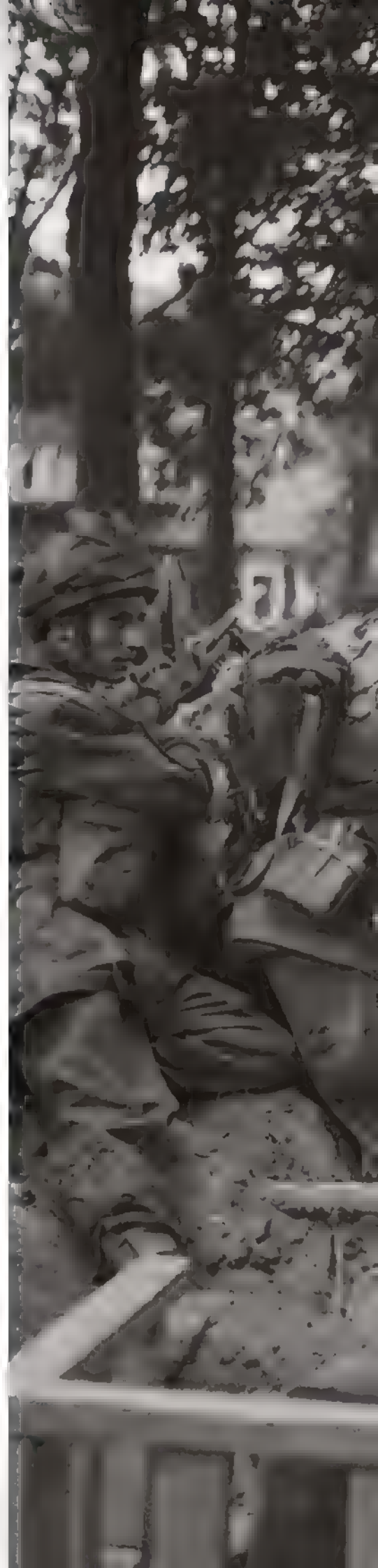
Frost's battalion proved most successful on the first day of the operation. A

Company, under Major Tatham-Warter, reached the northern end of the road bridge at around 8pm, after a few minor encounters with the enemy. C Company, under Major Victor Dover, escorted engineers to the rail bridge at Oosterbeek, only to see it blown up while they were still 50 yards away. With no bridge to capture, C Company joined the march to Arnhem. By the end of the day, around 750 men were deployed at the northern end of the Arnhem road bridge, but three attempts to capture the southern end were thwarted.

The last attempt, at around 10pm, saw the British use a flamethrower to attack a pillbox. It ignited a fuel and ammunition store, which promptly exploded, causing a fire that burned throughout the night and made an assault across the bridge impossible. As Private James Simms recounted, "Vehicles were burning. One was an ammunition lorry, and every now and again it shuddered as the fire reached another box of bullets and shells and they exploded in a fantastic firework display." On the bright side, the fire had also likely destroyed the cables used to activate demolition charges. Less welcome was the fact that after a heroic assault on the bridge and a spirited defence by the Germans, a stalemate had been reached. No one was going anywhere.

Day one of the Arnhem operation was certainly – and unnecessarily – hampered by appalling communication problems. Since there were over eight miles between the troops at the bridge and divisional HQ, some loss of communication would be expected, but the radios used were Type 22 sets, with an effective range of just over three miles. The British radios fared worst of all, sometimes proving unable to receive signals from just a few hundred yards away. As Major Hibbert put it, "My first job was to inform Division we were on the bridge. But not one of our wirelesses could pick up the faintest whisper from anyone in Northern Europe except John Frost, who was all of 50 yards away." It was later discovered that the radios used the same frequencies as German and British public broadcasting stations.

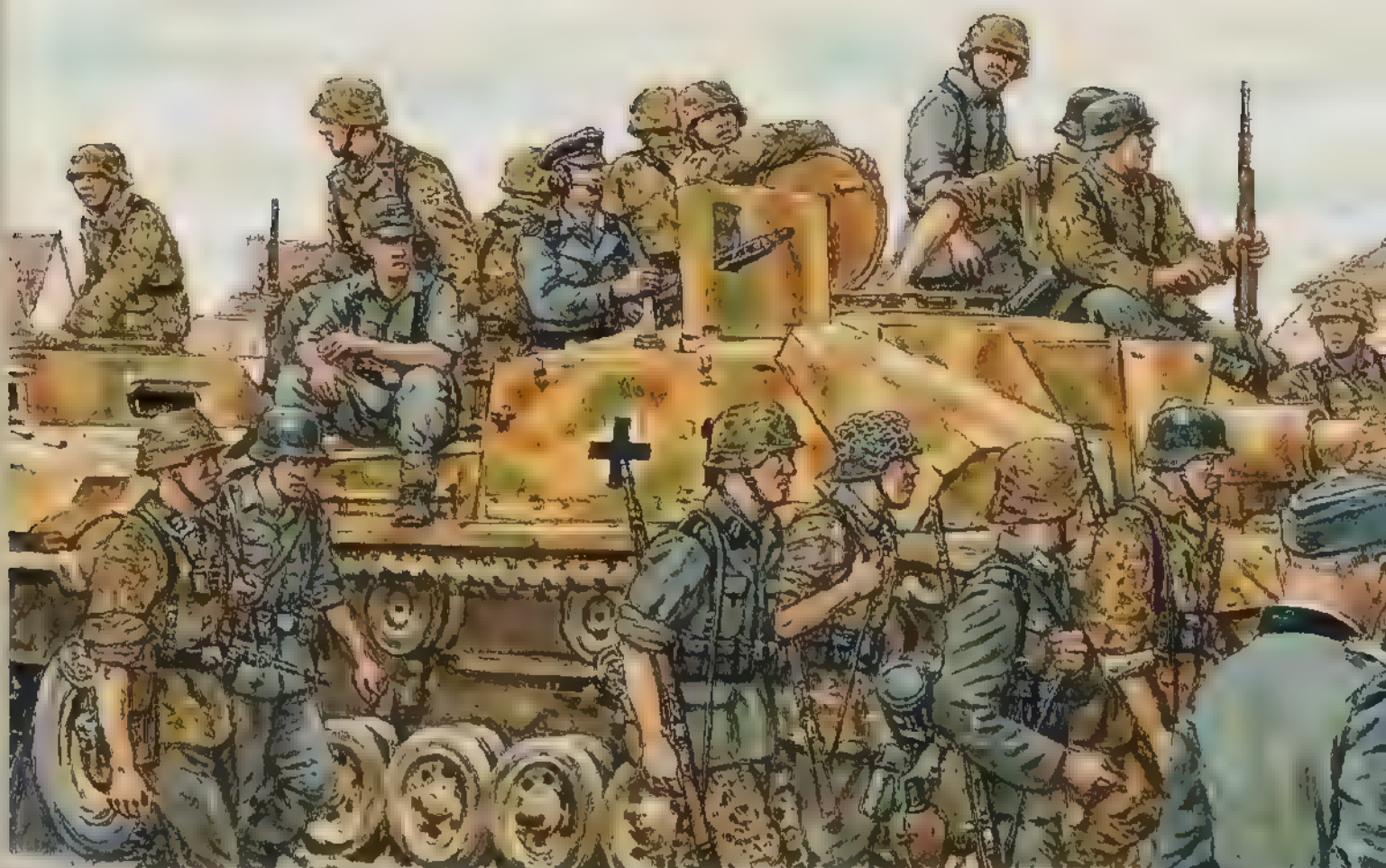
Two American units dropped with the 1st Airborne carried SCR-193 VHF crystal sets, which should have been used to call in air support, but these also failed. With the RAF under orders not to attack without ground communication due to the danger of friendly fire, this led to a crucial lack of air support. Yet again, bad planning had hampered an operation that was already on a knife edge. ▽







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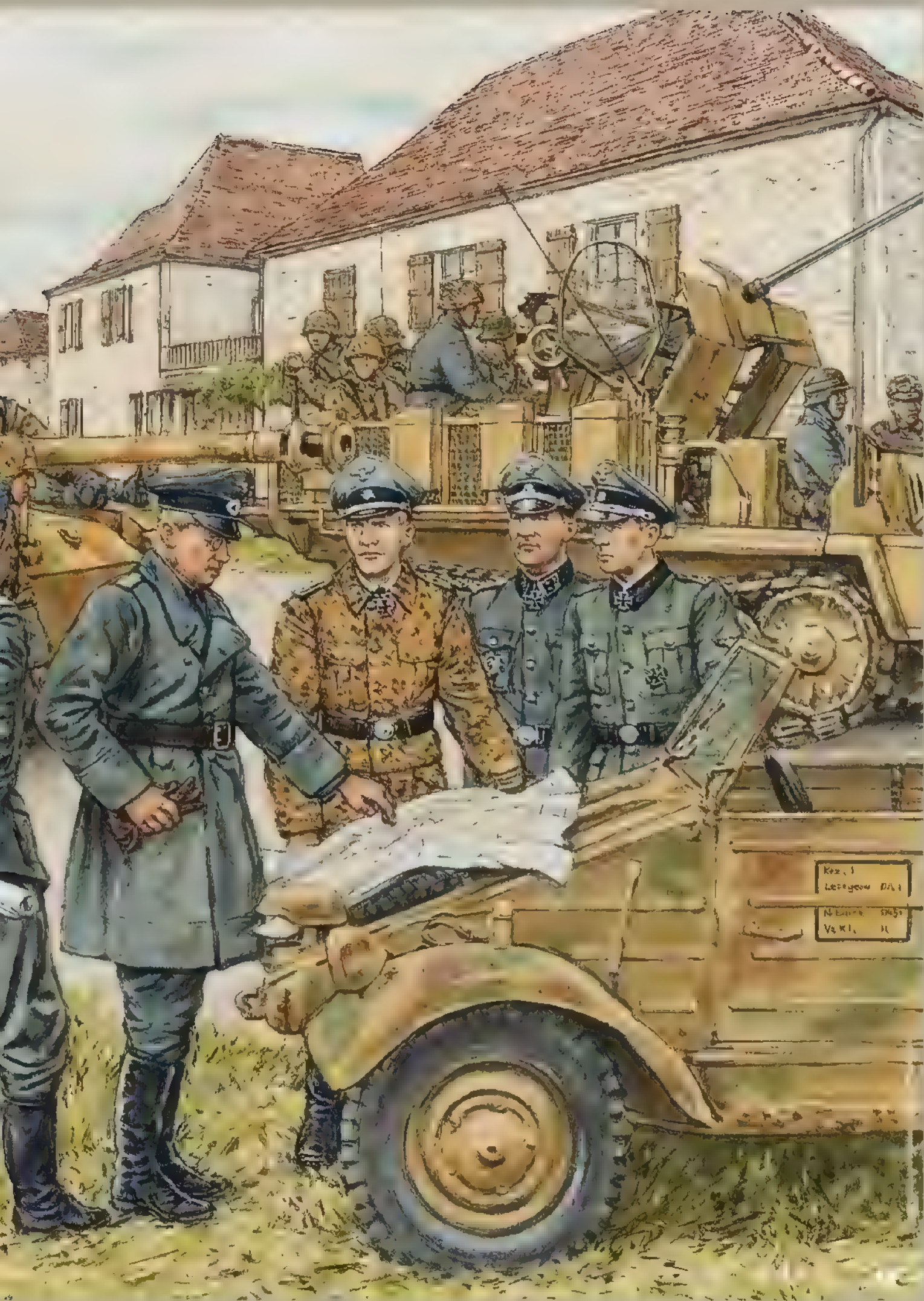


**WALTER MODEL CONSULTS  
WITH THE COMMANDERS OF  
II SS PANZERKORPS, 1500 HRS,  
17 SEPTEMBER 1944**

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# THE SECOND DAY AT ARNHEM

**SECURING THE BRIDGE AT ARNHEM WAS VITAL IF OPERATION MARKET GARDEN WAS TO SUCCEED. BUT CIRCUMSTANCES WERE AS MUCH AN ENEMY AS THE GERMANS...**

**B**y the morning of Monday 18 September, the 9th SS Panzer Division Hohenstaufen, commanded by SS Lieutenant Colonel Walther Harzer, had isolated the 1st Parachute Brigade, preventing it from moving east to join the troopers at the bridge. Three companies (albeit under strength) with self-propelled guns lay to the north, and a training battalion augmented by anti-tank troops lay to the west. And, of course, Graebner's 9th SS Panzer Division was on the other side of the bridge.

The Allied forces at Arnhem suffered yet another setback that morning. England was covered in a thick fog, forcing a three-hour postponement of the second airdrop. There was fog over the Rhine too, as the men of 1st Airborne at the Arnhem road bridge were roused by the sound of engines and tank tracks. The incautiously optimistic among them cheered, anticipating the arrival of the XXX Corps, but the more realistic troops realised they couldn't have got there so soon. The sound was a counter-attack coming across the bridge, with German half-tracks and armoured cars attempting to retake the bridge's northern end.

As the Germans crossed the bridge, they were hit by heavy gunfire from the paratroopers, who were perfectly positioned to receive them. The Germans had misjudged the strength

of the British lines, believing they were facing only around 120 paratroopers, a gross underestimate. The attack was decisively beaten back, though the British were taking casualties, both killed and wounded. One of the wounded was paratrooper Ron Brooker. "The attitude of these men, many of whom were quite badly wounded, was truly amazing," he later said of the injured. "They could still manage a laugh and give moral support to each other. The main topic of conversation was, 'any news of the XXX Corps?'"

There was certainly news about reinforcements from the west (from where the 1st and 3rd Battalions were expected to come) and it wasn't good. The Germans were firing on British positions from this direction, which indicated they were holding their position and resisting the approaching battalions. Would the troops at the bridge become completely cut off?







#### THE BRIDGE TO THE BRIDGE

In fact, the 1st and 3rd Battalions were making steady, if slow, progress. Lieutenant Colonel Fitch of the 3rd left his previously intended central route to the bridge and pursued the southernmost course instead, the one taken by Lieutenant Colonel Frost the previous day. Travelling with Major General Roy Urquhart, commander of the 1st Airborne Division, and Brigadier Gerald Lathbury, who had left HQ to join them, they set out at 4:30am and fought their way through numerous skirmishes en route. When Urquhart and Lathbury returned to HQ at around 4pm, Fitch launched an attack on the bridge, but it was repulsed. With nowhere to go, the battalion – which had suffered around 15 killed and 50 wounded – dug in near St Elizabeth Hospital.

Believing the 3rd Battalion was already in possession of the crossing, Lieutenant Colonel Dobie took the 1st Battalion along the middle route to the bridge. He continued on this route until receiving a radio message from Frost, and decided to revert to his support role and reinforce Frost's battalion. After running into further opposition, he diverted south, making his way towards, but not yet reaching, the bridge. He eventually reached the 3rd Battalion, after taking numerous casualties, and also dug in at the St Elizabeth Hospital.

Back at the bridge, fighting became ever more fierce. By now, the bridge was completely blocked by burning vehicles, making progress across it all but impossible. Morale was lifted by a rumour that the XXX Corps were only five miles to the south, and would be in Arnhem soon, if only the troops could hold on a little longer. This rumour was completely untrue.

If the troops' morale was holding, the Dutch civilians were beginning to despair. "We were dejected and downhearted,"

said Heleen Kernkamp, who was staying in a house with 15 others, mostly women. "We had no idea what the outcome would be. All that had happened so far could not be in vain, could it?"

At around 9:30am, SS Captain Graebner's 9th SS Reconnaissance Battalion decided it was no longer needed in Nijmegen, and made its way north back to Arnhem. It was a sizeable force, with five armoured cars, nine half-tracks and eight truck transporters. As it approached from the south, the British initially held their fire, presumably mistaking it for the anticipated arrival of the XXX Corps. The lead armoured cars made it onto the bridge, and picked their way through the burning vehicles and other debris back to German lines.

Without waiting for a report from the armoured cars, Graebner brought his half-tracks and troop trucks to bear on the bridge, but by now the British had realised they were not Allies and opened fire with mortars, machine guns and anti-tank weapons. The driver of the first half-track was wounded and veered into another, causing a pile-up that blocked the way through for the rest of the battalion. Graebner himself was killed, though his body was never found. (There are over 31,500 Germans buried at Ysselsteyn, Holland's only German war cemetery, but Graebner's grave is empty.)

"WITH LITTLE OR NO FIRE COMING FROM THE SCHOOL, THE GERMANS THOUGHT THE BRITISH INSIDE HAD BEEN DEFEATED"

A group of engineers under Major Eric Mackay had taken up positions in Van Limburg Stirum School and were coming under heavy fire. Machine gun fire was so intense that splinters from the floorboards were causing injuries. As darkness set in, the Germans added flamethrowers to the mortar and machine gun attacks, setting fire to the attic. The engineers spent three hours using parachute smocks to put out the fires. A 20lb anti-tank bomb destroyed part of the south wing of the school and











knocked Major Mackay unconscious, but he survived. Yet the Germans failed to capitalise on their successes by storming the building, which was by now in a very perilous state. As Mackay put it, "We were given breathing space, but not for long."

With little or no fire coming from the school, the Germans thought the British inside had been defeated. At around 3am the following day, they left their positions and stood around three or four yards from the school on all sides, seemingly unaware of the presence of the British engineers still in the building. "They were unaware of our existence," said Mackay. "It was too good to be true." A synchronised grenade drop was followed by bursts from the Bren and Sten guns held by the engineers. In a few minutes it was all over, and their position was relatively secure again until the following morning.

### WEATHER DELAYS

The second airdrop had been due to take off from Britain at 7am, and bring over the 4th Parachute Brigade (the Parachute Regiment's 10th, 11th and 156th Battalions), commanded by Brigadier General John Winthrop Hackett, and C and D Companies of the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment. It would also bring the rest of the 1st Airborne Division's vehicles and heavy weaponry. But its arrival was badly delayed by fog – in fact, take-off didn't start until around 11am. The fog had by then cleared, and aside from some light anti-aircraft fire, the planes reached the European coast without incident.

The plan was for the 4th Parachute Brigade to capture the high ground to the north so the Germans couldn't use it to launch attacks on the units who by then should have been holding the bridges. A unit of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) were also flown over and assigned repair duties, fixing weapons and vehicles that had been dropped the

previous day. Morale was high – The Daily Express and the Daily Mirror had run large and very positive articles about the previous day's operation – but the waiting around was becoming frustrating for the troops.

The landing zones were once again to the west of Oosterbeek and Arnhem. The gliders landed on ploughed fields, which caused some damage and casualties. The REME unit were supposed to ride folding bicycles to their rendezvous point, but this proved impossible on the fields, so they first wheeled them to the railway station at Wolfheze, where those injured in the landing were being treated. They then cycled to the Hartenstein Hotel, liberated the previous day by the 3rd Battalion and now serving as the Divisional HQ. It was an uneventful journey, though they passed numerous bodies along the way. As armorer Ron Jordan observed, bunches of flowers had been placed on the bodies of fallen British troops, but no such courtesy was extended to the Germans.

### ARNHEM ALIGHT

The paratroopers' drop zone was already under attack as they landed, and some were dropped in the wrong place. Thankfully, the German troops weren't their best, and in many cases were quickly overcome. The South Staffordshires headed for Arnhem and John Frost's troops, followed by the paratroopers, but found the going trickier than expected. The haphazard way in which the 1st and 3rd Battalions had advanced did little to clear the area of Germans, so skirmishes were common. They eventually approached the St Elizabeth Hospital, where Lieutenant Colonel Fitch's 3rd and Lieutenant Colonel Dobie's 1st were dug in. But the city of Arnhem was in chaos, with pitched battles fought in the streets and houses ablaze among the neat terraces.

Dobie planned a move that would allow the troops to break out and support Frost at the bridge. The South Staffordshires, supported by the 11th Battalion, would take the higher ground past the hospital and around the museum, while the 1st Battalion would advance along the riverbank. It was a manoeuvre that had to be carried out at night, due to the exposed position of the troops near the river. It was intended that the assault would begin at 9pm, but after Divisional HQ heard (wrongly) that the troops at the bridge had surrendered, they ordered it to be abandoned. This order was reversed at 1am the following day when it was realised that the bridge

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VAIN, COULD IT?"

HELEEN KERNKAMP  
DUTCH CIVILIAN

had not in fact surrendered, but by then several hours had been lost.

A short while after the second landing, the RAF dropped supplies onto one of the landing zones. The drop itself was extremely successful – almost all of the equipment and supplies landed exactly on target. However, most of it remained uncollected since the landing zone used for the drop had not been secured, and radio problems meant the RAF could not be alerted. It was the first of many unsecured supply drops, as yet again poor communication hampered the operation.

So the situation in Arnhem at the end of the second day of Operation Market Garden was not looking good. Far from being in control of the bridges as the plan had demanded, only the northern end of the vital road bridge at Arnhem was in Allied hands, and the position of the troops that held it was becoming ever more precarious. Nineteen of Frost's men had been killed, and well over a hundred had been wounded, with no medical units on hand to treat them. Food, water and ammunition were running low. The troopers were having to recover supplies from the dead, both British and German, at great risk to themselves. Frost's deputy, Major David Wallis, had been killed by friendly fire. The bridge was ablaze with wrecked vehicles, and its approaches walled by burning and semi-destroyed buildings.

The 1st and 3rd Battalions were inside a mile and a half of the bridge, but although they'd been reinforced by paratroopers and infantry from the second drop, they had yet to break out and reinforce Frost at the bridge. What was planned as a swift, decisive strike to quickly capture a strategically important target was rapidly turning into a war of attrition, which was exactly what the Allies didn't want. ■

THE BRIDGE WAS  
ABLAZE WITH  
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BUILDINGS

# THE SECOND DAY IN THE

## AS THE BRITISH BATTLED TO TAKE ARNHEM, THE AMERICAN TROOPS FACED THEIR OWN CHALLENGES...

**A**fter a successful opening day, Monday 18 September saw Brigadier General James M Gavin's 82nd Airborne Division in a strong position. Most of the bridges it had been assigned were in its control, the only exception being the vital bridge at Nijmegen, which spanned a broad section of the Rhine.

This bridge had to be taken; without it, the XXX Corps would struggle to press north to reinforce Arnhem and then move into Germany. The Groesbeek Heights, considered strategically important in staunching German counter-attacks, were in Allied hands. The Grave bridge had been taken, as had the Molenhoek-Heumen bridge over the Maas-Waal Canal.

A 25-mile perimeter had been established around their section of Highway 69. There was no German activity at all to the west of the perimeter, and what troops there were to the east tended to be inexperienced and poorly equipped. A few minor targets such as the two Honinghutje bridges over the Maas-Waal canal were still to be taken, but aside from the main road bridge at Nijmegen, the area was secure. At Nijmegen, Graebner's 9th SS Panzer Division had temporarily halted the American advance, but now it had returned to Arnhem, it seemed little could stop the 82nd Airborne on day two of Market Garden.

The 82nd was aware its successes were not being matched by the British further north. A Monday morning entry in the intelligence log read, "Dutch report Germans winning over British at Arnhem," with the British acknowledging that they were in "a grossly untidy situation."

The German positions were reinforced on the morning of 18 September, ready for a counter-attack scheduled for 6:30am. Three Luftwaffe battalions were to support newly arrived artillery, some of which used captured Russian guns. Along with the infantry, around

2,300 troops in total were to attack the American positions at Groesbeek, advancing from within Germany across the Dutch border.

### BRIDGES ARE BLOWN

At first light, Gavin went to the HQ of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment and found the Nijmegen road bridge had yet to be taken. He was not pleased. But a more pressing problem was German attacks on the landing zone. There was to be a second drop between midday and 1pm, when reinforcements and medical support would arrive. It was vital the landing zone remained in American hands. Although it was taken by the Germans that morning, the second drop was delayed by bad weather – an extremely fortunate occurrence, as things turned out. An American counter-attack at 1.10pm by the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment retook the landing zone, which was cleared by 2pm. Sixteen German flak cannons were taken, along with 149 prisoners.

The Honinghutje bridges, across the Maas-Waal Canal, were on the most direct route from Grave to Nijmegen and were therefore considered the most important of the canal bridges. The highway bridge crossed the canal next to the railway bridge, with the former being the primary target. Early in the morning,

"GERMANS WERE  
ATTEMPTING TO GET  
ON THE BRIDGE.  
WE KEPT THEM AT  
A DISADVANTAGE  
WITH RIFLE FIRE"  
LIEUTENANT LLOYD L. POLETTE



Lieutenant Colonel Lindquist radioed Major Holmes, commander of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment's 2nd Battalion, and ordered him to take the bridges. The First Platoon of F Company, under Lieutenant Lloyd L Polette, was given the task.

The platoon approached the bridges from the southeast. The German defenders opened fire when it was around 300 yards away, but with the light in his favour, Polette believed one last push could take the target. But enemy fire proved too intense. Twelve of his platoon were killed or wounded, and he was still 150 yards from the bridges. Polette sent a runner to ask for mortar support, while keeping his



# AMERICAN ZONES



guns trained on the bridges. "From time to time we could observe Germans walking, or attempting to get on the bridge," he later said. "We kept them at a disadvantage with rifle fire. It was apparent the enemy was attempting to destroy the bridge."

At around half past nine, Polette's troops were reinforced by Lieutenant Thomas Tomlinson's Second Platoon of E Company. For an hour, the two sides fought each other to a standstill, with the Americans unable to get any closer to the bridge and the Germans finding it difficult to place their explosive charges. But the deadlock was broken at 10:30am with explosions on both bridges. The railway bridge was destroyed, while the road

bridge stood damaged, but intact. Under cover of 81mm mortar fire, the Americans charged the remaining bridge, capturing it by midday. Lieutenant Polette was later awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions that day.

The delayed second airlift eventually arrived in the early afternoon, using 450 tugs and gliders. The drop was successful, landing the 82nd's artillery. Specifically, it landed the 456th Parachute Field Artillery battalion, units from the 319th and 320th Glider Field Artillery Battalions and medical support units. It also brought in numerous anti-tank guns and jeeps, only a few of which were damaged or destroyed during the drop.

The second airdrop was followed by a supply drop later in the evening, when 135 B-24 bombers flew at low level (around 100 feet) to resupply the Division. Around 80 per cent of these supplies were recovered, mostly under the cover of night. Although successful, this supply drop wasn't as well targeted as it might have been; quite a few crates landed outside the American perimeter.

By the end of the second day, the 82nd Airborne was in possession of one more bridge and had reinforced and strengthened its defences in other areas, but was no closer to taking its main objective, the road bridge at Nijmegen. The task was growing more difficult as ▶

the Germans had also reinforced their defences, though the Dutch resistance used sniper fire to hamper their attempts at laying explosive charges, and destroyed anything they found that resembled demolition equipment.

### CALLING IN AIR STRIKES

Capturing the Nijmegen bridge was becoming imperative. That evening, Brigadier General Gavin was informed that the XXX Corps would arrive at around 8:30am the next day. Could the additional firepower of the arriving ground troops be exactly what he needed? Or would the delays caused by the bridge not being under Allied control when they arrived cause serious problems for the advancing troops?

Further south, the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne became caught in woodlands near the Wilhelmina Canal, where one of its most celebrated heroes was to fall. Lieutenant Robert G Cole was a veteran of the D-Day Landings in Normandy, where he led a costly but successful bayonet charge at Carentan. The 502nd was attacked by the German 59th Division, which had been heavily reinforced and might even have been back up to its full fighting strength of a thousand troops.

An air strike was called. Cole's unit was asked to put identification panels in front of his position, to prevent it coming under friendly fire. Cole did the job himself. As he shielded his eyes to watch the attack by P-47 Thunderbolts, a sniper shot him in the head from a farmhouse around 300 yards away, killing him instantly. Two weeks after his death, he was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for leading the bayonet charge at Carentan.

The previous day, a platoon under Lieutenant Edward L Wierzbowski had been sent south to Best, about four

AS LIEUTENANT COLE WATCHED THE AIR STRIKE BY P-47 THUNDERBOLTS, A SNIPER SHOT HIM IN THE HEAD FROM 300 YARDS AWAY

## DEMOLITION PLATOON PARATROOPER 82ND AIRBORNE

Parachute infantrymen received special training on assault demolition materials, and were given more extensive demo training than other infantrymen. Certain platoons were tasked with specific demo roles.

Training in communication techniques and signals equipment was equally important: special Signal Corps fulfilled this key role. Such knowledge areas were paramount. The paratrooper in the field needed to be resourceful, given his potentially isolated status. This figure wears the M1943 jacket and modified trousers with leg ties, and bears the 82nd Airborne patch on his left shoulder. He is armed with the .30 M1 Garand rifle and wears two light khaki M1 ammo bandoles across his chest, together with M3 binoculars in the M17 leather case. He carries a demolition pack in his left hand and is also equipped with the M2 flashlight. Other vital equipment includes the M1942 bayonet (16' long) with scabbard (2), standard 10" version (3), M8 scabbard (4), with M3 trench knife inside, usually attached to the lower leg. M2 pocket knife (switchblade), with cord (5).

.30 M1 Garand rifle (6), M7 grenade launcher, for Garand rifle (7), M1A7 rifle grenade adapter (8), Garand carrying strap (9), 5-round cap for M1 rifle, with ammo pouch (10), M1 Garand cleaning and maintenance tool (11), Oil bottle and grease bottle (12), and pull-through cord, for rifle maintenance (13). Hawthorn ATK Light Anti-tank Mine M16 (14) and lighter (15), EC-611 walkie talkie (16), M1C helmet with liner (17) - this replaced the earlier M2 helmet. M1943 entrenching tool (18) and cloth cover (19), G5-24 leather Signal Corps pouch, with knife inside (20) - this was carried by demolition and Signal Corps paratroopers in particular.

M1910 first aid pouch for two belts (21), two-studded version, front and rear views. M1943 version of first aid pouch (22). Field dressing (23). Pigeon leg capsule (24) and homing pigeon carrying harness (25); the Signal Corps used these to convey messages as late as September 1944. Type 2 demolition pack (rear view) (26), plus demolition equipment: detonator cord (27), time fuse and pull fuse (with ring) (28), demolition block (29) and TNT blocks (30). E





miles west of Son, to secure a single-span concrete bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal and give the advancing XXX Corps an alternative route north past Eindhoven. Unbeknown to the Allies, around a thousand 15th Army troops protected the supply road through Best. At dawn on Monday, the guards on the northern end of the canal bridge the platoon was attempting to take had been withdrawn, though the southern side was well protected by troops that were heavily dug in. They ambushed a retreating group of Germans on the north bank of the canal, then took out an 88mm cannon on the south, before the German positions were attacked in the airstrike called in by Lieutenant Cole.

## AMERICAN

At 11am, the bridge was blown — Wierzbowski's objective had failed. Unfortunately, there was no way back for his platoon. On Tuesday morning, a grenade attack inspired some heroic action on the part of the Americans. Two incoming grenades were scooped up and thrown back at the Germans before they could explode, though a third detonated and blinded Private Laino. A fourth grenade landed near the blind machine gunner, but he groped around where he heard it fall and managed to throw it away from the American position.

Platoon scout Private First Class Joe Mann, who had earlier helped destroy an ammunition dump and an 88mm gun, was by now wounded in four places, including both arms, which were held against his body in slings. A fifth incoming grenade landed behind him. Unable to pick it up due to his injured arms, he instead leaned back and smothered the blast with his body. "My back's gone," he said to Wierzbowski as the smoke from the blast cleared. He died two minutes later, and was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

With his ammunition almost depleted and only three men unwounded, Wierzbowski was no longer in a position to fight on. He attached his handkerchief to the muzzle of his carbine and surrendered his platoon.

Elsewhere, the 101st Airborne's 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment moved south from Bokt to the northern end of Eindhoven, securing the approaches to some of the minor towns nearby. Taking the city quickly was of the utmost priority. As its commander, Colonel Robert F Sink, put it, "If you see any Germans, just let







them filter on through you and I guess the ducks [a nickname for the 502nd PIR] will take care of them. We have got to get to Eindhoven this morning, and we can't waste any time killing Germans."

Despite Sink's words, the journey south was not uneventful, with the troops coming under fire from mortars, 88mm guns and infantry. There was sporadic fighting in Eindhoven too. As they reached the outskirts of the town their main targets were the enemy's 88mm guns, which were tackled by bazookas. One such encounter is described by Sergeant Jack MacLean. "We heard the order 'bazookas up front' and joined an H Company platoon making a flanking move. We ran into a couple of machine gun emplacements and a couple of riflemen. The platoon drove them off and we were able to catch one 88 being backed into an alley. We put three rounds into it, destroying it and killing the crew."

With the help of the Dutch resistance, leading companies of the 506th PIR chased away any remaining Germans, turning prisoners over to the Dutch. The Germans were by now outnumbered and demoralised, and the citizens of Eindhoven started to celebrate its liberation.

#### END OF THE LINE

At around noon, the 506th was met by lead reconnaissance units from the long-awaited XXX Corps, specifically the Irish Guards. The ground troops were on their way, but without the expected air support from Hawker Typhoons, which were grounded by fog over their Belgian airfields.

At around 4pm, the 101st made radio contact with the advancing XXX Corps, advising that the bridge at Son had been blown up, and the crossing at Best remained in German hands. They requested a Bailey bridge, a prefabricated truss bridge that could be erected very quickly with no specialist tools needed. When dismantled, it was light enough to be moved by truck and assembled by carrying the pieces by hand, but when built it was strong enough for tanks and other armoured vehicles to cross. It was assembled over the Wilhelmina Canal by XXX Corps engineers and German prisoners of war in around ten hours.

Eindhoven was finally declared clear of enemy activity at approximately 5pm, and the main reconnaissance units of the advancing XXX Corps arrived in the city at around 6:30pm. The Garden part of the operation was finally underway in earnest. ■

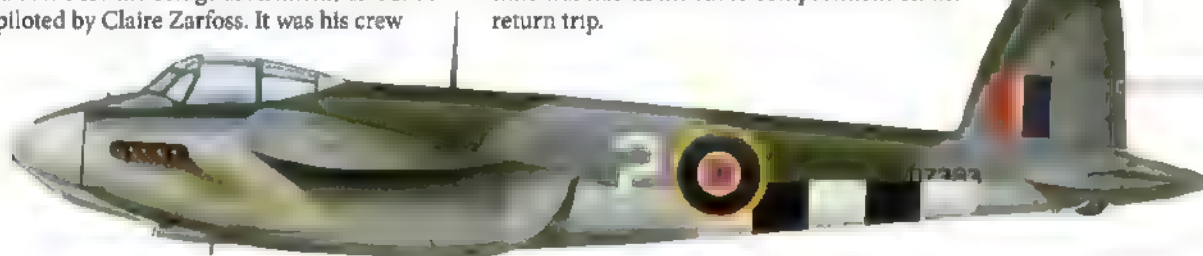
# ALLIED AIRCRAFT



## B-17G-85-BO 43-38286 FLYING DUTCHMAN OF THE 7<sup>TH</sup> BS/34<sup>TH</sup> BG, MENDLESHAM - EARLY 1945

Delivered to Cheyenne on 17 July 1944, this aircraft flew to Kearney Field, Nebraska, 11 days later, and then on to Grenier on 6 August. Having arrived in the UK by the 18th of that month, the bomber was duly assigned to the 7th BS at Mendlesham. During the course of a lengthy combat tour, the bomber would complete 83 missions, the first of which was flown on 17 September – this was also the 34th BG's first B-17 mission following its transition from the B-24. On this day, the group flew in support of the ill-fated battle for the bridge at Arnhem, 43-38286 being piloted by Claire Zarfoss. It was his crew

that named the bomber Flying Dutchman, since many of its members hailed from Pennsylvania. During its time in the UK, Flying Dutchman was 'home' to at least four crews, who flew the gamut of missions, including raids on airfields and industrial targets. They also flew ground support missions. The bomber ended its European service with a food drop to Holland on 7 May 1945. It was returned to the US by Don McCutchan's nine-man crew, also carrying 11 passengers; rumours suggest a raucous time was had in the radio compartment on the return trip.



## C-47A-75-DL 42-100847, 91<sup>ST</sup> TCS/439<sup>TH</sup> TCG, UPOTTERY, DEVON - 17 SEPTEMBER 1944

Flown by 1Lt Don LePard during the airborne drop at Groesbeek, this aircraft, in standard markings for the period, had the number 2 chalked on its side under the aft window. This was used as an identifying mark by paratroops loading on the ground, and written in chalk, it usually blew away in flight. Note the hasty painting out of the invasion stripes.



## HALIFAX A V SERIES 1A (SERIAL UNKNOWN)/9U-K OF NO 644 SQN, NO 38 GROUP, TARRANT HUSHTON - D-DAY, 6 JUNE 1944

No 644 Sqn was formed from a nucleus provided by No 298 Sqn's C Flight in March 1944. In preparation for the invasion of Europe, both squadrons added Gee and Rebecca Mk II nav aids to their aircraft, and replaced Merlin XX engines with more serviceable Merlin 22s. At much the same time, three-bladed propellers were replaced by four-bladed units, although aircraft with three-bladed airscrews were still common on D-Day itself, including the subject of this profile. As 6 June

dawned, No 644 Sqn was still in the process of re-coding its aircraft. Some wore the original single-letter aircraft codes, others the three-digit codes with the squadron prefix 2P-, and yet others the new prefix 9U-. Merlin-powered A Vs began to be displaced by A IIIs during August 1944, and both types were used in the Arnhem operation. A Vs lingered in service until the end of the war, and were even used during the Rhine crossing, (Operation Varsity) in March 1945





### B MK IV DZ383/? OF NO 138 WING, 2<sup>ND</sup> TAF, LASHAM - SEPTEMBER 1944

This aircraft was known as 'the query' because it did not belong to any single unit within the three squadrons that comprised No 138 Wing, 2nd TAF, at Lasham, in Hampshire, in 1943-44. A Polish airman's first attempt to paint a question mark on DZ383 went awry as he got it the wrong way round on one side! On 17 September 1944, DZ383 was flown by Flt Lt Vic A Hester of No 613 Sqn whilst cameraman Flg Off Ted Moore filmed firstly the attack on a barracks

at Arnhem ahead of Market Garden operation, then the actual airborne drop itself. During the Shellhaus raid on 21 March 1945, DZ383 was flown by Flg Off R E 'Bob' Kirkpatrick, an American pilot with No 21 Sqn, accompanied by cameraman Sgt R Hearne from No 4 FPU. Although the Mosquito was damaged by flak over Copenhagen, Kirkpatrick nursed 'the query' back to Norfolk, where he force-landed at the USAAF B-24 base at Rackheath, near Norwich.



### P-51D 44-14660 LITTLE DUCKFOOT OF LT GERALD TYLER, 364<sup>TH</sup> FS, LEISTON - OCTOBER 1944

Gerald Tyler scored a triple kill while flying this aircraft, his second LITTLE DUCKFOOT (the first was P-51B-543-6376), over Arnhem on 18 September during Operation Market Garden, destroying two Bf 109s and an Fw 190. These successes gave him ace status, and he claimed his seventh, and last, kill (another Bf 109) in the same area the following day. 44-14660 was written off in a taxiing accident at Leiston on 19 October 1944. Tyler remained in the USAF post-war and retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel. His relationship with the Mustang did not end there, for in the 1960s he was General Manager and Vice President of Cavalier Aircraft Corporation, which rebuilt P-51s for civilian and military use. In 1968 he flew one of his company's aircraft non-stop across the Atlantic. ■



# GARDEN

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**A**fter Operation Market came Garden, the fierce land battle involving the troops dropped during the Market section of the operation and the ground-based forces of the British Second Army.

Spearheaded by the XXX Corps with the XII Corps and VIII Corps guarding their flanks, the Second Army was to advance north from Allied-held territory up Highway 69 through Eindhoven, Nijmegen and





# ASSAULT

Arnhem, crossing the bridges that should have been secured during Operation Market and relieving their defenders. By creating a corridor of Allied territory that ran deep into occupied Holland, they could bypass the Siegfried Line defences along the German border and strike deep into the heart of Germany. This strike would isolate the industrial Ruhr region, effectively ending Germany's participation in the war. ■

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# MAKING PLANS FOR THE GROUND OFFENSIVE

A WET TERRAIN STREWN WITH RIVERS, WATERWAYS AND CANALS STOOD BETWEEN XXX CORPS AND ARNHEM

**T**he key commanders in charge of Operation Garden's ground forces were XXX Corps commander Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks, Lieutenant General Miles Dempsey, head of the British Second Army and Lieutenant General Neil Ritchie of XII Corps.

The key commanders in charge of Operation Garden's ground forces were XXX Corps commander Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks, Lieutenant General Miles Dempsey, head of the British Second Army and Lieutenant General Neil Ritchie of XII Corps.

Dempsey was an efficient soldier who understood the importance of terrain. He had been awarded the Military Cross for bravery in the First World War, and had already served with distinction in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, and been involved in the D-Day landings. Ritchie was less distinguished, though he'd seen action in the Western desert and at Normandy. Horrocks, meanwhile, was an aggressive commander who led from the front, but he had suffered from ill health after being wounded in North Africa in 1942. He had been unwell during August of 1944, but was eventually considered fit to return to command for Operation Market Garden in September.

The Guards Armoured Division was placed at the head of the XXX Corps, with the 43rd Wessex and 50th Northumbrian Infantry Divisions

acting in reserve. If the operation went according to plan, these ground troops would advance up Hell's Highway as far as the southern end of the area that would be under the control of the 101st Airborne Division. This would see the XXX Corps in and around Eindhoven. By the end of the second day, they would have progressed through the 101st Airborne-secured zone, through Son and Uden, and reached the 82nd Airborne's territory at Grave. From there, they would progress a little more slowly, owing to the numerous rivers and canals that needed crossing. They would reach the 1st British Airborne Division at Arnhem by no later than the fourth day.

## VITAL CROSSINGS

In all, the XXX Corps were to cross six major waterways, as well as several ►

IF BRIDGES WERE  
DESTROYED BY  
THE RETREATING  
GERMANS, THE  
ALLIED ENGINEERS  
WOULD HAVE TO  
REPLACE THEM







ARNHEM



00028

Historical marker text.



1 LIEUTENANT GENERAL  
BRIAN HORROCKS

2 LIEUTENANT GENERAL  
HENRY CRERAR

3 GENERAL SIR  
BERNARD MONTGOMERY



# ALLIED COMMANDERS OF WORLD WAR II

**L**ieutenant-General Brian Horrocks of GOC XXX Corps was an armoured warfare specialist who commanded British XIII Corps at Second Alamein. He also led the XXX Corps of British 2nd Army in NW Europe after D-Day. As such, Horrocks was one of 'Monty's' most trusted lieutenants.

He was largely responsible for the very rapid advance across Belgium, but he was unable to fight his way through to relieve the paratroopers at Arnhem in September, being confined to a narrow corridor defended by unexpectedly heavy enemy forces. After the war, this most English of generals became a popular public figure through broadcasting work.

(1) Here he wears a British BD blouse with the collar open and faced khaki, and bearing gorget patches. The XXX Corps patch, a black boar on a white disc on a black square, is worn on both sleeves; characteristically he wears over the blouse a soldier's leather trench-jerkin. Standard BD trousers are confined by web anklets; note the brown officers' boots.

(2) Lieutenant-General Henry Crerar of the GOC 1st Canadian Army was an almost unknown figure, yet he won the DSO on the Western Front with an

artillery unit in the First World War. Staff appointments occupied most of his career, and he came to the UK as a senior officer of Canadian Military HQ on the outbreak of war. He was Chief of the General Staff in Canada in 1940, but returned to Europe first as a divisional commander and later as a corps commander as Canadian forces increased. After brief service in Italy, he formed the 1st Army for the Normandy invasion, and led it in some of the heaviest fighting of the campaign. He wears a general's SD cap, identical to the British Army pattern; and on the shoulder straps of his trench coat, a metal ranking above a metal 'Canada' title.

(3) General Sir Bernard Montgomery of the GOC 21st Army Group, whose fondness for odd uniforms is legend. Here, 'Monty' wears his famous beret with the general officer's and Royal Tank Regiment cap badges. His BD blouse has an opened, faced collar with gorget patches; woven ranking on the shoulder straps; and the 21st Army Group patch on both sleeves. He wears it over a grey pullover and old KD slacks, relics of the desert, and in several photos sports this long scarf of camouflaged parachute silk. He habitually wore a gold chain looped between the pockets of the blouse. ■

smaller rivers, canals and brooks. So the crossings targeted by the Market part of the operation were vital. If any of the bridges were destroyed by the retreating Germans, the Allied engineers would have to replace them with rapidly deployed Bailey bridges, or send infantry across in small boats. Either of these solutions would be very costly in terms of time, and leave the crossing troops very vulnerable to German counter-attack.

The terrain could also prove problematic. The land either side of the highway was often marshy or wooded, which would slow down the flanking forces supporting the XXX Corps, namely the XII Corps on the left and the VIII Corps on the right. This was especially true north of the river Waal, between Nijmegen and Arnhem.

Operation Garden was clearly an extremely bold plan, but was it too bold? At the far end of the XXX Corps' advance, the 1st British Airborne Division had to hold the bridges at Arnhem for four days, which is a long time for an airborne force to fight without support. The rationale behind an airborne attack is to seize or neutralise enemy-held fixtures – in this case bridges – using the element of surprise, with friendly ground forces then advancing and holding what the airborne troops have captured. Alone, the airborne units are likely to be too lightly armed and armoured to hold on to their gains for long. Yet that's precisely what the 1st British Airborne were being asked to do, and without adequate anti-tank weapons.

## FALTERING RESISTANCE

Allied intelligence believed that the enemy's resistance was already broken. During July and August, the German armed forces had suffered a series of defeats. Between the Normandy landings of 6 June and the middle of August, the Wehrmacht had seen over 23,000 men killed in action, almost 200,000 ▶

OPERATION  
MARKET GARDEN  
WAS CLEARLY AN  
EXTREMELY BOLD  
PLAN. BUT WAS  
IT TOO BOLD?

BEFORE THE  
OPERATION, THERE  
WAS BAD NEWS  
FROM THE CODE  
BREAKERS AT  
BLETCHLEY PARK

were missing or captured and over 67,000 wounded. Many of its key divisions in the west had been destroyed completely, or reduced to a fraction of their fighting strength. The Allies enjoyed almost total air superiority, allowing them to harass retreating units, causing substantial casualties and loss of equipment and vehicles. Although the German 15th Army was in the area, it was being successfully held by Canadian forces. As a result, it was believed the XXX Corps would face little resistance and very few armoured units. But Allied over-confidence was premature. The British 21st Army Group had failed to seal off the Scheldt Estuary, allowing the harried German 15th Army to use commandeered small vessels to escape into Holland with 65,000 troops, 225 guns and 750 trucks.

On 5 September, less than two weeks before Operation Market Garden was to be launched, there was bad news from the code breakers at Bletchley Park. Located in central England, Bletchley Park housed the Government Code and Cypher School, which used early mechanical computers to decode enemy radio transmissions. Cracked German Ultra intelligence reports showed the 9th and 10th Panzer Divisions had been moved to the areas near Nijmegen and Arnhem. This intelligence was later reinforced by aerial photographs and information supplied by the Dutch resistance. President Eisenhower was concerned, and his Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith, voiced these concerns to Montgomery. Perhaps surprisingly for a meticulous planner like Montgomery, he dismissed the intelligence, batted off concerns, and ordered the operation to go ahead as scheduled.

## ATTACK IMMINENT

Naturally, the Germans were also gathering intelligence and making plans of their own. It was clear that the ground forces in Belgium, who were of course preparing for

the push along Highway 69, were in the process of being reinforced. Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, commander-in-chief of the German Army in the West, and Field Marshal Walter Model, who had also briefly commanded the German Army in the West between August and September 1944, realised an attack was imminent. The intelligence division of Model's Army Group B reported that it expected an attack to take place towards Nijmegen, Arnhem and Wesel, ultimately making for German industries on the Ruhr. As it turned out, it was an astute observation.

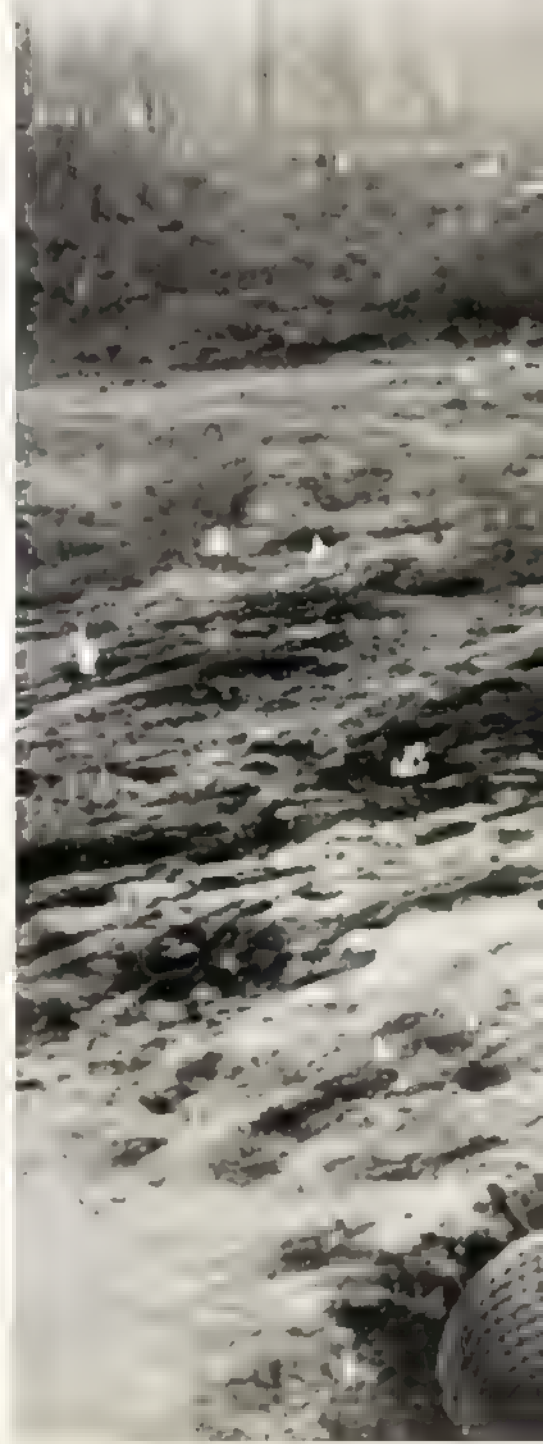
In preparation for the expected attack, von Rundstedt planned for an Allied assault of 60 full-strength divisions, though in fact they faced only 49. Model dispatched the German 719th Infantry Division south to the Albert Canal, on the Holland-Belgium border. He also requested from Germany heavy armoured reinforcements, which he planned to position along the canal and Siegfried Line, building a German-controlled front from Antwerp to Metz. As the 719th dug in at the canal, it was joined by the heavily depleted 84th, 85th and 89th Infantry Divisions under the command of Lieutenant General Kurt Chill. Colonel General Kurt Student, commander of the German airborne forces, was ordered to Holland to reinforce the Albert Canal with the newly formed First Parachute Army, which was built from surviving units of destroyed divisions.

## PANZERS COMBINE

The Panzer Divisions that had been spotted in Arnhem and Nijmegen were under the command of Lieutenant General Wilhelm Bittrich, and were in fact there by chance. Due to being constantly in action since late June, by early September they were down to between 6,000 and 7,000 men, which was around 30-40% of their fighting strength. Field Marshal Model had ordered them to refit in relatively safe German-held areas.

As the plans for receiving the expected Allied assault grew, the 10th SS Panzer Division was to be used to provide armoured reserve for the new German line. The 9th SS Panzer Division was instructed to transfer all its heavy equipment to the 10th, before being moved back to Germany and replenished. From out of the chaos, a credible defence was taking shape. ■

*Dug in: Canadians of the  
British second army during  
the Battle of Arnhem*







# THE XXX CORPS ATTACK BEGINS

THE SECOND ARMY FINALLY SET OUT ON THEIR  
JOURNEY ALONG HELL'S HIGHWAY AS THE SECOND  
PHASE OF OPERATION MARKET GARDEN COMMENCED

**O**n the morning of 17 September 1944, the waiting was finally over. Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks of the XXX Corps was informed that the operation was green lit to go ahead, and would not be called off at the last minute as so many had feared.

At 12:30pm Horrocks was told the airborne forces were about to take off, and that the ground attack would commence at precisely 2:35pm. Yet throughout that day and into the night, there was no direct radio contact between the XXX Corps and the 101st Airborne, whom they were expected to meet and relieve first as they progressed up Highway 69.

By this time, the Germans had positioned their troops, collectively known as the Divisionsverband Walter, in readiness for the attack. To the west of the highway was Lieutenant Colonel Baron von der Heydte's 6th Parachute Regiment, a veteran unit with seasoned troops. He had four battalions in total, with around a thousand men. Further along, there were three battalions from a training parachute regiment guarding the road to Valkenswaard, the first town along Highway 69, with Luftwaffe Penal Battalion Six acting as a ground unit. To the east of the road were two battalions from the II SS Panzer Corps. Although depleted, they were likely to prove a

formidable opponent. Furthermore, they were supported by an artillery force of six 105mm guns, and also some captured Russian ordnance. Not a huge force, but as historian David Bennett put it, "While numerically the German defences were thin, the British thoroughly underestimated the German talent for improvisation, rapid reaction and the use of veteran troops to stiffen poorly trained and inexperienced units."

## ROLLING BARRAGE

Horrocks waited until he was sure the 101st were in action, before beginning his own march into history. At 2:15pm, the Corps artillery opened fire, with



## THE XXX CORPS ATTACK BEGINS

*Read warriors: A convoy of  
armoured cars  
through the Dutch countryside*



350 guns blasting a rolling barrage a mile wide and five miles deep. Seven squadrons of Hawker Typhoons targeted all known German positions on the road to Valkenswaard, destroying several of the German anti tank guns guarding the highway. Horrocks' advance was led by the Guards Armoured Division, which was made up of Grenadier, Coldstream, Irish and Welsh Guards. At the front of this division were the Irish Guards, with Lieutenant Keith Heathcote manning the lead tank.

82nd Airborne Division commander Major General James Gavin was impressed. "I always thought that the Guards were the best soldiers that I

saw on either side in the war, not only because of their soldierly qualities, but because of their nonchalance and style," he later commented. "It was a remarkable division." Lieutenant Colonel Robert Sink of the 101st Airborne Division agreed. "Those Guards divisions – they're good outfits. Best in the British Army. You can't get into 'em unless you've a 'Sir' in front of your name and a pedigree a yard long. But don't laugh at them. They're good fighters."

The leading units of the XXX Corps crossed the border into Holland at around 3pm. The ground force was as immense as the air armada that was flying to the drop zones. Over 20,000 vehicles waited to move down the road ▶



1 WILLYS  
JEEP



2 SERGEANT, 6TH AIRBORNE  
ARMoured RECCE



3 MAJOR  
GOO



# AIRBORNE RECCE

**T**he 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron could not have functioned without the Willys Jeep (1) or 'Blitz Buggy', used by A Troop in Oosterbeek, Holland, September 1944. The jeep proved ideal for airborne recce units, as it could be deployed by Horsa glider and carried a useful load.

This jeep - captioned in an Arnhem photo as crewed by Tprs V. Taylor and A. Dickson of A Troop - carries a single 303in Vickers K-gun mounted on the right. The windshield has been removed, and the spare wheel moved to a mounting on the radiator (note on the retaining plate an indistinct triangular marking enclosing a two-digit number '2?'). Brackets and straps hold ammunition boxes on the bonnet and a radio is mounted in the rear. A white star may be seen on the rear side, a narrow vertical yellow line as a centre-of-balance marking on the side, a medium-blue registration number along the side of the bonnet, and the usual '41' Recce serial on the right end of the bumper (the latter are both obscured here by stowed weapons and tools). Squadron personnel wore Airborne helmets, Denison smocks, Airborne BD trousers and basic 37 pattern webbing.

Also shown (2) is a Sergeant of the 6th Airborne Armoured Recce from the UK, in 1944. Originally a Royal Armoured Corps squadron attached to 6th Abn Div, this became a regiment of the Reconnaissance Corps on 14 January 1944. Many

original personnel continued wearing headgear and badges from their parent regiments, but new personnel, such as this NCO, wore the Recce badge on the maroon Airborne Forces beret. 'Reconnaissance' shoulder titles were sometimes used; however, this sergeant displays on his right BD sleeve only the parachute qualification brevet, above (on both sleeves) the Bellerophon-and-Pegasus sign and straight 'Airborne' title of Airborne Forces in light blue on maroon, above his badges of rank. No Recce arm-of-service strip was worn by this unit. Note the Airborne version of the BD trousers, with extra pockets.

Finally, we have Major C.F.H. Gough (3) of 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron, Arnhem, September 1944. 'Freddie' Gough, whose family had won three Victoria Crosses in previous wars, commanded 1st Air-Landing Recce Sqn in Italy in autumn 1943 before its transfer to the UK, where it became 'Airborne'. Major Gough, a Royal Navy veteran of the Great War, provided inspiring leadership in the desperate fighting at Arnhem. In this reconstruction from a photograph he is shown tired and dusty. He wears a Recce Corps badge embroidered in gold and silver on a maroon triangle sewn to the Airborne Forces beret; a camouflage net veil as a scarf over a light khaki shirt and tie, and a modified Denison smock with full-length zip, slanting chest pockets and knit cuffs, worn with a pair of corduroy slacks. ■

to Arnhem, with some 9,000 engineers at the rear, who would replace any damaged or destroyed bridges with prefabricated Bailey bridges.

The Germans kept their heads down and under cover while the artillery barrage passed over. But as soon as it was past and the XXX Corps were advancing, they opened fire with anti-tank guns and Panzerfausts, hand-held anti-tank rockets. It proved a successful counter-attack. Soon nine Allied Sherman tanks and two scout cars were on fire, their crews running for cover. The Typhoons were directed towards the German positions, as was the supporting artillery fire, but it took a while before the pathway was cleared of ordnance, allowing the infantry to advance and deal with the remaining pockets of German resistance.

## PRISONERS DIVULGE

Right from the start, the ground offensive had been delayed by heavier-than-expected German resistance, but there was a plus side. Numerous prisoners had been taken, mostly from the Luftwaffe Penal Battalion, the Waffen-SS and the 6th Parachute Regiment. Interrogation revealed the location of further German positions.

As the fighting died down, the Irish Guards once more advanced north along Highway 69. They met with sporadic fire, as concealed German units launched attacks from cover and then melted away, but there was no more serious opposition at this stage. By 5pm they had reached the southern edge of Valkenswaard, a small farming town, and found it undefended. The Corps entered cautiously but unopposed at around 7:30pm, and had neutralised the few German units in the town by nightfall. This was not good progress. The original plan was for the XXX Corps to reach the 101st Airborne in Eindhoven 13 miles from their ▶

"PUSH ON TO  
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TOMORROW, OLD  
BOY. BUT TAKE  
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LOST A BRIDGE"

BRIGADIER GWATKIN



starting point at around 5:15pm, but at the end of the first day, they had only reached Valkenswaard, which was six miles short of Eindhoven.

In fact, they were actually a full ten miles away from the 101st Airborne Division, which had been delayed in its march south from the drop zone into Eindhoven, leaving the town still uncaptured. With the light fading, the Irish Guards at the head of the XXX Corps were ordered to remain in Valkenswaard for the night to rearm and refuel, before continuing the advance in the morning.

According to Irish Guards commander Joe Vandaleur, the delay was to allow the Corps to clear the road behind, enabling bridging units to come forwards and replace

a bridge that had been destroyed at Son. As Brigadier Gwatkin put it, "Push on to Eindhoven tomorrow, old boy, but take your time. We've lost a bridge." However, this account is disputed. Other sources say the Irish Guards weren't informed about the loss of the Son bridge until the next day. Either way, the subsequent wait in Valkenswaard is today seen as a tactical mistake, and the Irish Guards should have pressed on to Eindhoven that evening.

### QUICK REACTIONS

By now, the Germans had realised what the allies were planning. Field Marshall Model moved his headquarters from Oosterbeek, near the landing zones used by the 1st British Airborne, and General

Wilhelm Bittrich of the 2nd Panzer SS Corps sent a reconnaissance company of the 9th SS Panzer Division to Nijmegen to reinforce the bridge defences. Speed and the element of surprise were vital to the success of Operation Market Garden, but quick reactions from the Germans were denying both to the Allies.

The Guards left Valkenswaard and continued their advance at around 6:45am the following morning, Tuesday 19 September. The 32nd Guards Brigade, led by the Welsh Guards, pushed east with the right flank, and came under heavy fire, losing a tank. Dutch civilians told them the towns of Geldrop and Heimond, east of the highway, were heavily defended, so they rejoined the





main advance and progressed closer to the XXX Corps. To the west of the highway, the Second Household Cavalry had crossed the Dommel river, having gone around Eindhoven itself. However, they found the bridges lacked the strength to carry the armoured units behind them. Progress both sides of the highway was impeded by weak bridges. As the Grenadier Guards reported, "Every time an advance seemed to be progressing, a canal or stream would intervene with a bridge that invariably broke after a couple of tanks had crossed."

On the highway itself, lead reconnaissance units from the Irish Guards met with the 101st Airborne Division in Eindhoven at around midday. Once more

they were held up by waves of enemy action, and this time they had no air support, as the Typhoons were caught up in heavy fog in Belgium. Pushing through the now-liberated Eindhoven, by 7:30pm the Irish Guards had reached the destroyed bridge at Son, where they stopped for the night so that Allied engineers could build a 40-ton Bailey bridge across the Wilhelmina canal in its stead.

Operation Market Garden was running behind schedule, but the XXX Corps had now reached the area held by the 101st Airborne Division as planned. They pressed ahead along the secured section of Highway 69 towards the 82nd Airborne's zone stretching from Grave in the south, to Nijmegen in the north... ■

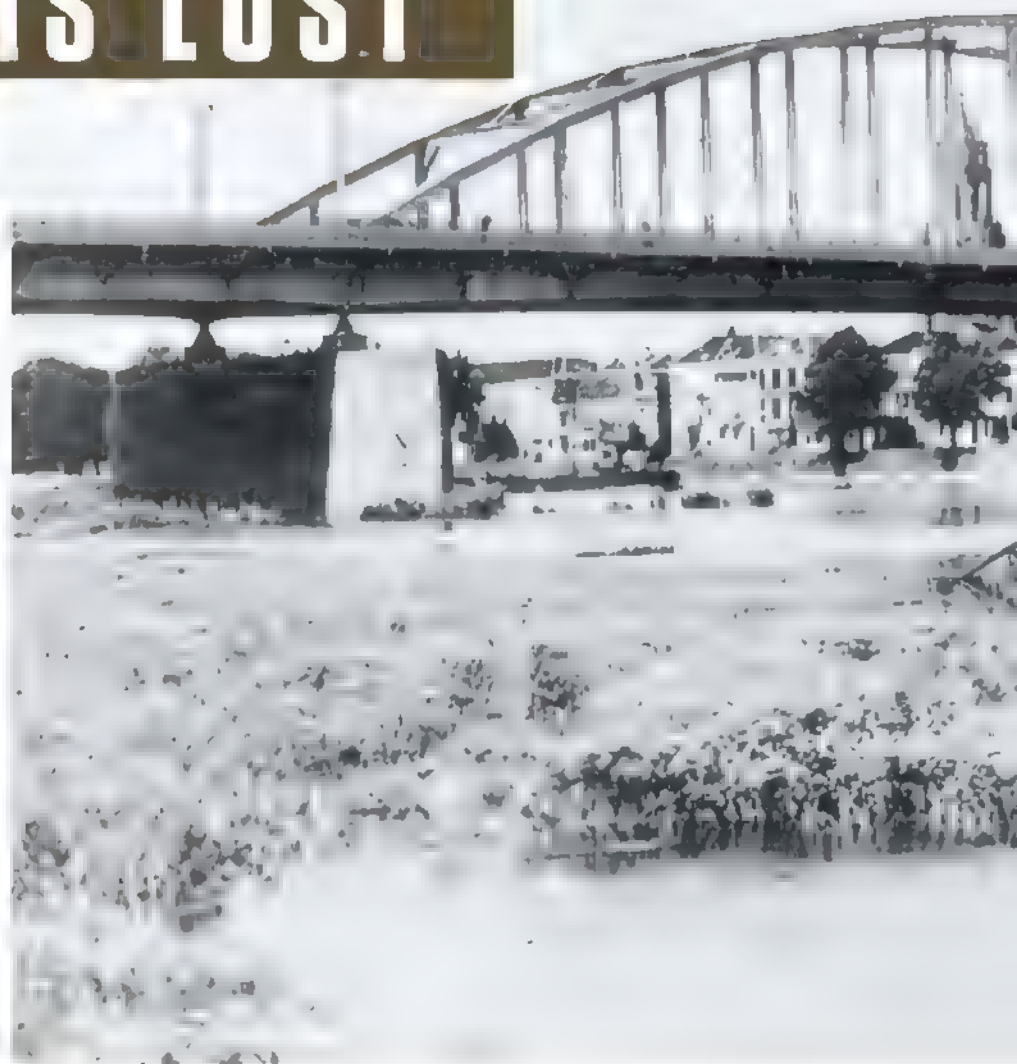
# THE ARNHEM BRIDGE IS LOST

ALLIED FORCES CONTINUED TO HOLD, BUT WITHOUT SUPPLY OR REINFORCEMENT THEIR POSITION WAS UNSUSTAINABLE

The morning of Tuesday 19 September – the third day of Operation Market Garden – saw the troops at Arnhem in a perilous situation. Major Eric Mackay's Royal Engineers and members of the 3rd Battalion's C Company, who had taken up positions in Van Limburg Stirum School, had successfully – and impressively – repelled a heavy German attack in the early hours of the morning.

But how much longer could they hold on? Ammunition was low, food was almost out, medical supplies were limited to morphine and field dressings, and water was running out after the supplies to Allied-occupied houses were cut off. With rest and sleep almost impossible, the troops were kept awake with benzedrine, making them nervous and irritable.

DOBIE'S 1ST  
BATTALION WAS  
SURROUNDED, AND  
CAME UNDER FIRE  
FROM MULTIPLE  
DIRECTIONS



Lieutenant Colonel John Frost's 2nd Parachute Battalion on the bridge had taken heavy casualties, and was running short of food, ammunition and medical supplies, forcing the paratroopers to forage from the dead – German and Allied alike. No medical units had yet arrived, and the bridge was in flames. And to make matters worse, the enemy now had air support, with ground attack aircraft firing on British positions. Reinforcements from the second air drop were on their way, but they were still

fighting through the town to get to the bridge, and Model's forces were slowing down the XXX Corps. Occasionally, the men managed to pick up the BBC on their radios, and heard broadcasts saying Arnhem was going to plan. The reality, however, was very different.

Early in the morning, the 1st Parachute Brigade pressed towards the bridge at Arnhem, which it intended to reinforce. The 1st Battalion led the way, with what was left of the 3rd Battalion and the 11th Battalion following. The 2nd South





**Focal point:** The bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem, photographed circa 1943

Staffordshires were on the left flank. But the way forward was well defended. The Germans had taken up positions in the town, with gun emplacements, concealed tanks and snipers barring the way. As 1st Parachute's Reg Curtis remembers, "In every direction, I could see the motionless forms of our men cut short in their tracks." It was dangerous for the civilians too. "A little girl of about ten years of age came out of a house and was hit – she was shot in the thigh," remembered Lieutenant Eric Davies. "Our medics attended to her,

but we had to hold the mother off as she went berserk."

### NO CLEAR ESCAPE

At dawn, Lieutenant Colonel Dobie's 1st Battalion was surrounded, and came under fire from multiple directions. Casualties were high – the battalion was soon reduced from 140 fighting men to 39. Trapped in open ground, under fire from three sides and facing a barrage from self-propelled guns from the north, the 1st Battalion quickly disintegrated, ►

"IN EVERY DIRECTION I COULD SEE THE MOTIONLESS FORMS OF OUR MEN CUT DOWN IN THEIR TRACKS"

REG CURTIS, 1ST PARACHUTE

Getty Images

WARDEN HILL



Warden Hill  
3, 000 ft. 1965  
Warden Hill



surrendering soon after 7:30am.

The 3rd Battalion, on the 1st Battalion's flank, was battered backwards, losing its leader, Lieutenant Colonel Fitch, to a mortar strike. The 2nd South Staffordshire Battalion and the 11th Parachute Battalion pressed forwards past the St Elizabeth Hospital and to the museum, but were also forced back by heavy gunfire. The South Staffs, under Colonel McCardie, formed strong positions in the museum and waited for the 11th Parachute Battalion to arrive in support. But it was not to be. When Major General Roy Urquhart returned to his divisional HQ in the Hartenstein Hotel, he decided the assault had failed and there was no point in committing the 11th. The Staffordshires were overwhelmed when they ran out of ammunition for their PIAT portable anti-tank weapons. Their positions in the museum were overrun and most of the surviving troops taken prisoner.

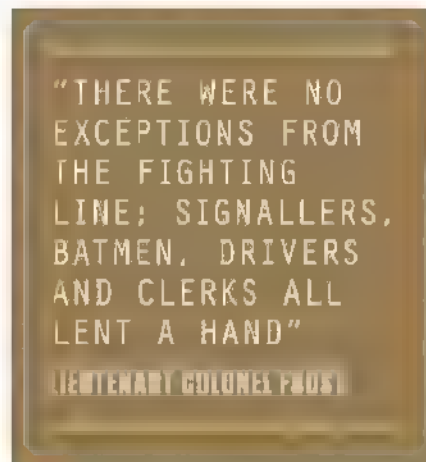
## TAKE THE HIGH GROUND

Urquhart ordered the 11th Parachute Battalion to form up and press north, to take the high ground at Heijenoord Diependal and support Brigadier Hackett's 4th Parachute Brigade, allowing them to advance into Arnhem from the north. But with the South Staffordshires overwhelmed, German tanks and infantry were freed up to advance towards their positions. As they were forming up, they were spotted. At around 2:30pm, they came under heavy attack, and the 11th Battalion also disintegrated. Around 500 survivors of these four shattered battalions retreated west to Oosterbeek, just over three miles away, with the Germans capturing or killing the last few pockets of Allied troops around the hospital. It had been a brave but ultimately futile advance, with the Brigade never reaching the Arnhem bridge it was supposed to reinforce.

Even though the reinforcements never reached the bridge, it could be argued that their actions actually bought more time for its defenders. While the superior German military forces in the area were fighting the 1st Parachute Brigade, they couldn't be turned on Lieutenant Colonel John Frost's troops at the bridge, and the XXX Corps were on their way up Highway 69. Could the brave actions of the 1st Brigade have given the forces holding the northern end of the Arnhem bridge enough time to hold out for the advancing ground troops?

## PRECARIOUS SITUATION

As Tuesday had dawned, the 2nd Battalion and its attached units holding the northern end of the bridge were in a precarious state. The reinforcements they were waiting for had retreated to Oosterbeek, and the ground force that was due to relieve them was still a day away (assuming the XXX Corps' advance was going according to plan – which it wasn't). They numbered around 600 men, and held half a dozen or so strong positions around the entrance to the bridge, but there was no defensive perimeter to hold back the Germans. Breaking out and taking over the south side of the bridge was by now impossible – all they could do was dig in and hold out for the arrival of the XXX Corps.



The Germans were unable to take their positions with infantry attacks: the British were too well positioned. Instead, they brought their ordnance to bear, shelling each British position in turn with mortars, artillery and tanks, breaking apart the buildings in which the defenders were holed up, leaving them vulnerable to attacks from well trained and motivated SS troopers.

The defenders were daunted, but not broken. Many still clung to the hope that reinforcements would arrive soon, but hope was fading. As the German tanks fired up their diesel engines for another attack, Private James Sims observed that it sounded like the start of a Grand Prix, and he could imagine the tank drivers jockeying for pole position so they could spearhead the next attack. Communication was still a struggle, but a radio operator managed to get through to HQ with a message that they were holding the bridge and looking forward to the arrival of reinforcements. The reply

was not encouraging. Due to the risk of the message being intercepted, HQ couldn't tell the bridge defenders exactly where XXX Corps were, however Major Tony Hibbert surmised – correctly – that they were still situated south of Nijmegen.

The Germans launched attack after attack, not in an attempt to storm the defensive positions, but to wear down the Allied defenders. The Germans were taking heavy losses, but so were the heavily outnumbered paratroopers. Food and water were running incredibly low, and ammunition was so scarce that Lieutenant Colonel Frost ordered his forces to stop sniping to conserve stocks. German snipers had no such problems, and continued to pick off the paratroopers wherever they could be seen, making it difficult to move between the Allied-held buildings without being targeted.

One attempt to move between buildings ended in disaster for a British officer. In the early hours of the morning, before daybreak, Sapper Donoghue called to a shadowy figure approaching the house he was guarding. Getting no reply, he cut him down with his Bren gun, only to find it was Major David Wallis, second in command of the 2nd Battalion, who had been inspecting the Allied-held houses. Although a British officer had been killed, no one blamed Donoghue for firing. As Tom Carpenter, Sapper with the 9th Field Company of Engineers put it, "It was a time when the next shape in a doorway was the enemy. It was that type of close-in sort of fighting, and a hand grenade has a very short fuse." The paratroopers found themselves pinned down, and as each building in turn was destroyed and evacuated, the area in Allied hands was gradually diminished.

## MISTAKEN IDENTITY


The schoolhouse once more came under threat. As they approached Major MacKay's position in the school and a nearby house, a small group of German Mark III tanks were almost disastrously misidentified as British Churchills. It was soon realised they were in fact covering an infantry advance, keeping the foot soldiers under cover as they shelled the buildings, pinning down the paratroopers. The battle went on for about five hours, and ended with the Allies still in possession of the school, but the house was lost.

Even as their position became more precarious, the paratroopers didn't lose their sense of humour. One trooper ►



*Moving on: Bren carriers from the British Army on the road into Holland on 20 September. Here, they pass a knocked out 88 mm gun which*





played a banjo during a lull in the fighting. When the Germans attacked once more, another soldier gestured to him and said, "You can hardly blame them, can you?" Still-working telephones were used for prank calls, such as the one to the Arnhem exchange, asking to be put through to 'Winston Churchill, Downing Street, London.' On seeing a German patrol lurking around the garden, another trooper called the Arnhem police station to report intruders.

By now, men of all ranks were fighting hard; for all intents and purposes, everyone had become a combat troop. As Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Frost put it, "There were no exceptions from the fighting line; all ranks were in it. Staff officers, signallers, batmen, drivers and clerks all lent a hand. We were content. Amid the din of continuous fire and crash of falling burning buildings, laughter was often heard."

Terraced housing gave the Allies an opportunity to retain a position after a house they were occupying became too badly damaged to provide safe cover. Using bayonets and spades, they broke a hole in a connecting wall, escaping the near-destroyed dwelling and taking refuge in the next one. This became known as 'mouse-holing' and was far less dangerous than risking machine gun and sniper fire by going outside. But by now the Germans had started using phosphorous grenades to set the buildings alight, causing an added hazard. The British were running out of options, and were being pressed back further and further towards the bridge. At the end of the third day, they were exhausted and almost out of supplies, and there was still no word of the XXX Corps.

### CONTACT WITH HQ

On Wednesday morning, a faltering communication was established with headquarters at the Hartenstein Hotel in Oosterbeek. For the first time since Operation Market Garden began, Lieutenant Colonel Frost spoke to 1st British Airborne Division commander Major General Roy Urquhart. Although full of congratulations for the way the 2nd Parachute Battalion had held the bridge, Urquhart could offer no promises about supplies or reinforcements. Instead, he suggested they recruit Dutch civilians to forage for food and ammunition that had been missed after a supply drop the previous day. It was an unworkable solution. As Frost pointed out, they were surrounded by Germans, holding a position with a perimeter of around 200 yards. Also,

the battle zone wasn't exactly awash with Dutch non-combatants; the only civilian in the area was a bedridden old lady whose relatives couldn't get to her in time for the evacuation. Urquhart had completely underestimated the fragility of their situation. It was clear Frost's 2nd Parachute Battalion was completely on its own.

By this point, the school was the only building in Allied hands beyond the road ramp, and its defenders hadn't slept for three days. In the afternoon, they were forced to abandon this now-ruined position as a German Tiger tank and a large self-propelled gun opened fire from close range. By now they were down to 14 able-bodied men and 31 wounded. This tiny force evacuated the school, carrying the wounded on makeshift stretchers made from mattresses and doors. They were soon caught in a crossfire, inflicting several casualties. With only six remaining men, MacKay ordered the wounded to surrender, and prepared to make a last stand himself.

"WE STOOD IN  
A LINE, FIRING  
FROM THE HIP,  
PRESSING THE  
TRIGGERS UNTIL  
THE AMMUNITION  
RAN OUT"

MAJOR ERIC MACKAY

Escaping from the school, the seven paratroopers could find nowhere to mount a defence. Digging in was impossible, and the surrounding rubble was too hot from the fires to take cover behind. Suddenly, their way was barred by around fifty German troops and a tank. "We stood in a line, firing our machine guns from the hip, pressing the triggers until the ammunition ran out," MacKay later said. The team, now down to four totally unarmed men, split up to better evade patrolling Germans. MacKay removed his officer's pips and destroyed his identity card, but was unable to avoid capture, and was taken prisoner.

The bridge itself also came under German attack. An infantry force placed demolition charges on the pillars ►

**Destruction:** Heavy smoke from bomb bursts covers the highway bridge at Arnhem (Holland) as B-26 Marauders of the 9th US Air Force score direct hits on 7 October.



supporting the ramp onto the bridge, in order to prevent it being captured from the south by the XXX Corps, should they arrive. As soon as they'd withdrawn, Royal Engineers from the 1st Parachute Squadron rushed out to remove them, with men of A Company from the 2nd Parachute Battalion giving covering fire. They managed to remove the fuses, but were beaten back, and Captain Grayburn of A Company was wounded in the arm and head. The engineers felt it safest to return again quickly and remove the now-fuseless charges, but by then the Germans were expecting them. A tank had been placed to cover the ramp, and the engineers and paratroopers ran into a hail of bullets from its machine gun. Captain Grayburn, his head bandaged and his arm in a sling, was killed instantly. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, becoming the only defender of the bridge to receive this honour.

The constant shelling from enemy mortars, artillery and tanks was taking its toll – there were frequent casualties. One of the wounded was Lieutenant Colonel Frost, who was injured in both legs by mortar fire and taken to the cellar of the brigade HQ, where the wounded were receiving what little medical treatment was available. Unable to fight on, Frost passed command to Major Freddie Gough, but by then there was very little to command. As Frost himself put it, "I wasn't really able to control things. Freddie came along and I told him to carry on. Not that there were any orders much to give by then."

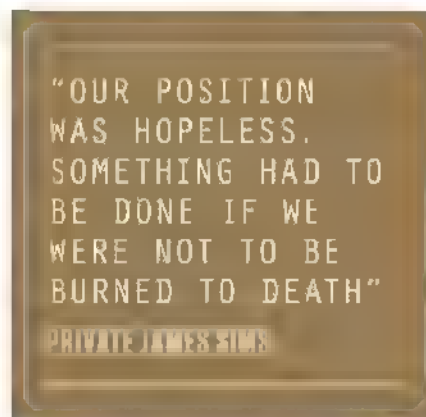
To make matters worse, the Germans now enjoyed air support, which was not matched by the Allies. American Typhoons armed with ground-attack rockets from the US 2nd Tactical Air Force were available, but their airfields in France and Belgium were fog-bound, keeping them on the ground. German aircraft continually strafed the British positions, but a careless Focke-Wulf 190 pilot (some reports say a Messerschmitt 109) gave the beleaguered ground troops a rare moment of celebration. Flying low, he misjudged his height and clipped the spire of St Walburgis Church, which some believed to have housed a German sniper that had been causing havoc down below. Both were killed.

### ACRID SMOKE

The Allies held very few buildings on the near-side of the road ramp to the bridge by now, and even those they did

hold were almost collapsed and/or on fire. Lying in the cellar of the brigade headquarters with other casualties, a wounded Private Sims observed, "By 4pm, it was obvious that our position was hopeless. We could hear the crackle of burning wood upstairs and it was becoming painful to breathe because of the dense smoke everywhere. Something had to be done if we were not to be suffocated or burned to death."

A two-hour truce was requested, and agreed, so the wounded could be surrendered to the Germans as prisoners of war. The Germans used the ceasefire to encroach on the perimeter, with officers approaching paratroopers in slit trenches, offering them cigarettes and urging them to surrender.



At around midnight on Wednesday 20 September, the few remaining officers – including Major Gough, Captain Drake (second in command of A Company) and 2 Platoon's Captain O'Callaghan – decided that any able bodied men and the walking wounded would make a break for it and retreat to Oosterbeek. As Major Hibbert put it, "The whole area was ablaze, and we no longer dominated it. We were down to around a hundred unwounded and walking wounded, with about five rounds of ammunition per head. We knew the Division was fighting five miles to the west, and I felt we could be more use back with them." They split up into groups of ten, and under the cover of darkness, they picked their way through the German lines in a dash for freedom.

Back in the brigade HQ cellar, around 300 wounded paratroopers who were unable to escape, simply waited as the Germans arrived to take them into captivity. One trooper, severely injured and possibly unable to survive, reached for a hidden Sten gun. But those nearby quickly disarmed him, fearing that his

last-ditch sacrifice would condemn them all. According to Private Sims, who was among the wounded, "He was fanatical in his hatred of the enemy, but ... if he'd been allowed to shoot, the Germans would have slung in grenades and been quite justified in doing so."

The beleaguered paratroopers were evacuated from the still-burning building, and despite fears that they would be instantly killed in accordance with Hitler's orders about Allied commandoes captured behind German lines, they were well treated. Some German troops shared their rations and cigarettes, and marched or stretchered the British soldiers through to enemy-held territory. "We were amazed at the large number of German dead in the street," Sims remembered. "It was a shocking sight, but also grimly gratifying to see the punishment we had meted out." A young member of the Dutch resistance who had burned his hands on a phosphorous grenade was not so well treated, being pulled out of line, forced to his knees and shot in the back of the head.

Meanwhile, the able-bodied escapees retreated west, ironically along the same route they had taken to the bridge just a few days earlier. Moving silently was difficult because the streets were covered in broken glass that crunched beneath their feet. Over the course of the night, virtually all the paratroopers who tried to escape were taken prisoner. Small pockets of resistance were also overcome, until by Thursday morning the bridge was uncontested and in German hands. The last radio message broadcast from the bridge was, "Out of ammo, God save the King," but by then it was only picked up by German radio operators charged with intercepting Allied broadcasts.

### HEADS HELD HIGH

The Battle of Arnhem had ended with the bridge still intact, but it was not to survive long. On 7 October 1944 it was bombed and destroyed by American B 26 Marauders to stop the Germans using it to move reinforcements. It was rebuilt in 1948, and in 1977 renamed the John Frostbrug – John Frost Bridge – in honour of its valiant defender.

Although the paratroopers were ultimately defeated, they were certainly not disgraced. As the German commander SS-Lieutenant General Wilhelm Bittrich put it, "In all my years as a soldier, I have never seen men fight so hard." ■

# MID-WEEK IN OOSTERBEEK

## ALLIED PARACHUTE BATTALIONS ENGAGED THE WELL-DEFENDED GERMAN LINE AS THEY ATTEMPTED TO REACH THE HIGH GROUND IN THE WOODS NORTH OF OOSTERBEEK

**T**uesday 19 September found Brigadier Hackett's 4th Parachute Brigade at Oosterbeek, around three miles west of Arnhem, trying to push eastwards to reinforce Lieutenant Colonel Frost at the Arnhem bridge.

The 156th Parachute Battalion, with the 10th on its flank, had planned to take the high ground at Koeppel, but met German defensive lines positioned in the woods near the railway. Meanwhile, the 9th SS Kampfgruppe, under SS-Lieutenant Colonel Spindler, was advancing westwards from the outskirts of Arnhem. There they had been in action against the 1st Parachute Brigade which had been tasked with reinforcing the bridge.

By late afternoon the paratroopers would face eight infantry companies and flak guns. Although not outnumbered, the British forces had never expected – and nor were they equipped – to attack a dug-in German line supported by artillery and armour. Despite some early Allied successes while fighting in darkness, during daylight hours the Germans' superior defensive positions and better equipment took their toll.

All the officers of the 156th's first two companies were wounded or killed, and they lost around half their fighting strength. The 10th Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Smyth advanced and was stopped by the same German line. Its casualties were fewer, but the Division

was in disarray and had lost its offensive capability. One notable fatality was Captain Lionel Queripel who, although badly wounded, stayed behind to give covering fire as his comrades retreated. This sacrifice earned him a posthumous Victoria Cross.

Major General Roy Urquhart arrived at Hackett's HQ and between them they decided to withdraw the brigade, taking it south of the railway line on the way back to rejoin the rest of the division in Oosterbeek. The troops crossed under the rail embankment at Oosterbeek Hoog station, supported by the Airlanding Brigade, but this crossing wasn't suitable for armour and vehicles. The only place they could cross the railway line was at the underpass at the now-abandoned Wolfheze station, which was covered by the Eberwein Waffen-SS forces. A unit under Captain Sepp Krafft was also closing in from the north, further hampering the retreat.

By the end of the day, around a hundred Allied troops had been taken prisoner. They managed to retreat across the landing zone used for Allied air drops, but German units had got behind them. There followed a pitched battle between German armoured cars and infantry, and the 156th, 10th and Scottish Border Battalions.

The Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade under Major General Stanislaw Sosabowski had been due to land near Oosterbeek on Tuesday, but dense fog in England kept the paratroopers on the ground. Their gliders, replete with the brigade's anti-tank guns and vehicles, were able to take off but in a cruel twist of fate they landed in the middle of the firefight involving the retreating British battalions. The Poles took numerous casualties as gliders were shot down. In the confusion, friendly fire became a problem as Poles escaping the gliders shot at the first troops they saw, which sometimes meant the British, and

retreating British forces mistook the disembarking Poles for the German units that had got behind them.

### SWIFT DISINTEGRATION

During the landings, the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade lost nearly all its jeeps, most of its supplies and three of its eight anti-tank guns. According to the Germans, they also lost Major General Sosabowski, whose jeep and briefcase were found among the gliders. As it happens, reports of his death were greatly exaggerated, and he was alive and well in England.

The retreat was turning into a rout. Vehicles were getting stuck at Wolfheze, blocking the brigade's retreat through the tunnel. Units were becoming separated, companies fragmented. With Hackett assembling what was left of the 4th Parachute Brigade in the woods south of the railway, Urquhart ordered it to take a more southerly route to Arnhem. By now, the 10th Battalion had around 250 officers and men – about half its normal fighting strength – and the 156th had around 270. The King's Own Scottish Borderers were similarly depleted, and down to about two thirds of their starting strength. Losses would have been even higher had the Germans realised just how haphazard the retreat had been, and pressed home their advantage to even greater effect.

With the 4th Parachute Brigade severely diminished and having lost most of its defensive capabilities, fighting its way through the German lines to reinforce the bridge at Arnhem was no longer an option. Instead, it would wait for – and join – the advancing XXX Corps, which was expected to be on its way through Nijmegen soon.

By the morning of the fourth day, Wednesday 20 September, the Germans felt more emboldened. In the suburbs to the east of Oosterbeek their infantry advanced, backed with tanks, mortars

ALL OF THE OFFICERS OF THE 156TH'S FIRST TWO COMPANIES WERE WOUNDED OR KILLED



and self-propelled guns, taking on the defensive positions maintained by what was left of the 1st, 3rd and 11th Parachute Battalions and the 2nd South Staffordshires. Around 450 paratroopers in total were left, but they had now been reinforced by Vickers machine guns and anti-tank guns that landed with the Poles. They faced fierce fighting as they retreated towards the town; by contrast, the units already in Oosterbeek faced no serious challenges that day.

"WE COULD NOT  
HAVE BEEN MORE  
SURPRISED IF THE  
ENEMY HAD COME  
DANCING TOWARDS  
US WITH FLOWERS"

GLIDER PILOT DICK ENNIS

Battered but unbowed, there was still plenty of fight left in the British paratroopers, as the Germans found when they called for their surrender. They approached one of the British-occupied houses on the defence perimeter from the woods opposite, with Glenn Miller's 'In The Mood' blasting from loudspeakers. According to glider pilot Dick Ennis, "We could not have been more surprised if the enemy had come dancing towards us spreading flower petals." The paratroopers were then hailed in excellent English, told that the division was almost wiped out, their position was hopeless, and that the XXX Corps were being defeated in Nijmegen and could never arrive in time. Fair treatment was promised if they surrendered: "Think of your wives and sweethearts at home" This suggestion was met with hoots of derision, and some very colourful language. ►



## WILLYS 5CWT 4x4 CAR, C TROOP, RECCE SQUADRON, BRITISH 1<sup>ST</sup> AIRBORNE DIVISION, ARNHEM

**T**he jeep was widely used in British airborne divisions for a wide range of roles including reconnaissance, towing artillery, command and communications, transport, and many other functions.

There were some 904 jeeps in both of the British airborne divisions, and the smaller airborne formations also used jeeps in significant numbers. There was an organised program for modifying jeeps for the airborne role, including adaptations to make it easier to fit jeeps into Horsa gliders. Some of these features are seen here on a recon jeep near the railroad culvert towards Wolfheze where an action involving the two jeeps of Lieutenant Peter Bucknall's C Troop took place. The windshield was

completely removed, stowage racks were added, the steering wheel was modified to permit it to be folded, and the spare wheel was moved to the front to permit more stowage on the rear.

This particular jeep is fitted with a radio as well. The airborne jeeps were generally finished in Shade No. 15 olive drab, which replaced Standard Camouflage Colour No. 2 khaki brown in April 1944. This colour was very similar to US olive drab, and was adopted in part to avoid the need to repaint existing US Lend-Lease vehicles. The British registration numbers were painted in medium blue, and the airborne jeeps also carried a small vertical yellow bar marking on the side panels to act as a center-of-balance marking. ■

## VICTORIA CROSS

After the first German attack was repelled, taking out several enemy tanks, the German commanders – SS Lieutenant Harder and SS Captain von Allworden – moved to outflank the four brigades' anti-tank weapons by swinging north and attacking the houses occupied by the 11th Battalion. They were held off by two six-pounder anti-tank guns. Another posthumous Victoria Cross was awarded for bravery during this action. Lance Sergeant John Baskeyfield was in charge of one of the six-pounders. According to his citation, he destroyed two Tiger tanks and a self-propelled gun by allowing them to approach within 100 yards before opening fire, at great risk to himself. Although his crew were all injured or killed, and Baskeyfield himself was seriously wounded in the leg, he fought on alone. As the attack intensified, his gun was knocked out, so he crawled to the other six-pounder whose crew had all been killed. Manning it single-handedly, he took out another self-propelled gun before being killed by a tank shell.

## HOMES ON FIRE

Lance Sergeant Baskeyfield's bravery proved vital in preventing the defensive position from overrun and the 11th Battalion routed, but ultimately it could not be held. After coming under attack from tanks, some with mounted flamethrowers, the houses were set ablaze and the paratroopers forced to retreat.

The German plan was starting to become clear. Advancing tanks were attempting to cut off the 2nd South Staffordshires and their anti-tank guns from the Rhine, making the bridgehead on the north bank of the river untenable. Retreating to a nearby church, the paratroopers formed another defensive line and repelled yet another German attack.

The 156th Parachute Battalion faced problems of its own. Fighting off several attacks as it retreated towards Oosterbeek, and down to a fighting strength of around 150, it mounted a bayonet charge to capture a defensive hollow in the woodlands, but was then trapped there for most of the day by mortar fire. After around eight hours of being pinned down, the 75 men who were still fit to do so mounted a second bayonet charge, breaking through German lines and pulling back to what was left of the Allies at Oosterbeek.

By Thursday 21 September, the bridgehead north of the Rhine was held

by only around 3,500 survivors of the 1st Airborne Division. Now running low on food and ammunition, they dug in to hold their ground and wait for the XXX Corps to arrive. The bridge at Arnhem had been lost, but if the bridgehead over the Rhine could be maintained, another crossing could be established. The paratroopers were on a knife edge. As engineer Ron Jordan put it, "In battle, you go into a higher state of awareness. Like a wild animal, every little noise has a meaning that has to be checked. You become so hypersensitive, it wears you out."

With too few men to defend what was originally a three-mile perimeter, the defensive line was drawn back into a smaller and smaller area, until in the end the Allied held zone was down to around 700 metres. Several more attacks were repelled. In the southeast, what was left of the 1st, 3rd and 11th Parachute Battalions and the 2nd South Staffordshires was by now commanded by Major Richard Lonsdale, erstwhile second in command of the 11th Battalion. In the north were the 7th King's Own Scottish Borderers, who resorted to a bayonet counter-attack to fend off an attack on their position. A vital piece of high ground overlooking the Heveadorp ferry crossing at Driel was lost, and counter-attacks failed to recapture it. The only reliable crossing to the south had been taken.

## DELAYED DROP

After a two-day delay due to fog, the paratroopers of the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade under Major General Sosabowski were finally able to make their drop on Thursday. Their planned drop zone was just south of the Arnhem bridge, but as this was by now in German hands, landing there would be suicidal. Instead, Major General Urquhart suggested a new drop zone four miles west near Driel, south of the Rhine. The Polish paratroopers would then cycle to the river and cross on a chain ferry, which by then should be in Allied hands.

One hundred and fourteen C-47 aircraft of the US 61st and 314th Troop Carrier Groups carried the 1,568 paratroopers. But things went wrong from the start. Continuing bad weather and a radio message that was interpreted as a recall caused 41 of the aircraft to turn back or land at the nearest airfield. They were also attacked by German fighters and fired on by ground units, despite the drop being preceded by Spitfires strafing enemy positions and gun emplacements. ►

**P**aratroopers from the Polish Independent Brigade (1) wore much the same uniform and kit as their British comrades – rimless steel helmets, battledress, Denison jump-smocks and 1937 webbing sometimes augmented by a 'toggle-rope' for crossing obstacles.

The weapon is the Sten sub-machine gun. The only Polish distinctions are the yellow eagle painted on the helmet; the dove-grey collar patches trimmed in yellow and bearing silver parachute insignia; and (not illustrated) light bluish-grey berets bearing conventional Polish national and rank insignia. (2) This trooper is a Second-Lieutenant of the 24th Lancers, 1st Polish Armoured Division. The earth-brown denim overall worn by Polish tank crews seems normally to have had two thigh pockets instead of the more usual single left pocket. Only the rank star on the shoulder strap distinguishes this officer's overall. The collar of his BD blouse, folded outside it, bears the regimental pennons – for 24th Lancers, white with a yellow stripe. The national eagle and a rank star are embroidered on the black Royal Armoured Corps beret. The scrubbed webbing set includes an open-topped pistol holster on the long RAC leg strap, and a notable lanyard, characteristically worn from the right shoulder wherever the holster was fixed. Officers wore brown boots. (3) This is a Private of the 10th Dragoons in the 1st Polish Armoured Division. The 10th Motor Cav. Bde. included this regiment of motorised infantry, and the regimental pennons (amaranth and orange divided by a green stripe) are sewn to the BD blouse. The black left shoulder strap and lanyard commemorate the old 10th Bde. of 1939. The national shoulder title is worn above, on the left sleeve, the 1st Armoured Division patch. In this regiment the right sleeve had a blue shield-shaped patch bearing the Cross of St Andrew and the arms of the town of Lanark in Scotland, where the 10th Dragoons trained. The helmet eagle 1937 BD and Thompson sub-machine gun are all conventional. ►



# THE POLISH ARMY, 1939-45



At around 5pm, approximately 1,000 men landed in the fields and orchards of the new drop zone. The brigade's 1st Battalion was almost completely missing and the 3rd was down to under 200 men. Only the 2nd Battalion was mostly intact.

The terrain was not in the Poles' favour. The roads in the Driel area were generally narrow, muddy and badly maintained, and aside from two dykes, the river edge was marshy and exposed, making it difficult and dangerous to cross by boat.

### MEDICAL AID

Two Polish battalions made for the Rhine under fire from mortar and artillery, one moving directly to the ferry crossing. Unlike the British, they wore armoured vests under their smocks, which gave them some protection, but the deployment was still proving extremely dangerous. The paratroopers were met by Cora Balthussen, a Red Cross nurse and member of the prominent Balthussen family, who owned an estate at the southern end of Driel. She proved a valuable source of information, as well as medical help. She was very impressed by the bravery of the Poles. "I have never [seen] such courage," she later said. "You did not hear one sound of screaming or crying. These were people from hundreds of miles away, waiting for a doctor to operate or amputate. A people so very earthy, so honest and with a sincerity that has always impressed us."

Balthussen told the paratroopers that there were German guns on both sides of the British perimeter, and the ferry had been destroyed, scuttled by the ferryman who didn't want it to fall into German hands. Patrols confirmed Balthussen's story (the ferry was discovered downstream, past the road bridge), and also found that the Germans commanded most of the riverbank, which included the ferry docks that they had partly destroyed. They had also made sure there were no water craft to commandeer in this section of the river.

With no immediately apparent way to cross the Rhine, Sosabowski and his troops retreated to Driel for the night. Setting up a makeshift HQ in the orchards, he took stock of the situation. His forces had suffered around 25% losses. Even though they could see the smoke rising from the still-burning battlefield at Arnhem – not to mention the flames and flashes of shellfire from Oosterbeek less than a mile away – his men had no way of joining the fight. ■







*In defence: A British staff captain  
fires his Enfield No. 2 revolver from 1st  
Airborne Division's headquarters in the  
Hartenstein hotel at Oosterbeek, during  
the battle for Arnhem, 23 September*

"I'VE NEVER SEEN  
SUCH COURAGE. NO  
ONE WAS SCREAMING  
OR CRYING"

GORA BALTHUSSEN,  
RED CROSS NURSE

WWW.IWM.GEDDY IMAGES

# MID-WEEK IN NIJMEGEN

## A RENEWED ALLIED ASSAULT ON THE NIJMEGEN BRIDGE WAS PLANNED, BUT DELAYS AND DANGEROUS RIVER CROSSINGS HAMPERED THE INITIATIVE FROM THE OUTSET

**B**y Tuesday 19 September, Brigadier General James Gavin's 82nd Airborne held large areas in and around Nijmegen. However, the vitally important road bridge that should have been in Allied hands by then if the plan was to be successful, still eluded his troops.

Gavin had been promised that the XXX Corps would arrive at around 8:30am, a day and a half late. They met this revised schedule, with the Grenadier Guards relieving the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Grave, where Gavin (who was still suffering from the injury he incurred in the jump) met Lieutenant General Frederick Browning, commander of the British airborne forces. Together, they planned a renewed assault on the Nijmegen bridge.

Gavin moved Lieutenant Colonel Ben Vandervoort's 2nd Battalion of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment from its position in reserve at the Groesbeek Heights, and it was joined by two companies from the Guards Armoured

Division. They mounted a combined attack on the southern end of the bridge. German artillery proved exceptionally well organised, and supported by high-quality SS infantry. Gavin guessed there were around 500 SS troops on the road bridge, an overestimate that paid tribute to their effectiveness. Defences on the rail bridge half a mile away were less strong, with no SS infantry believed to be present. As the light faded in the evening, the houses on the south bank of the Waal were purposely torched to show up the advancing Allies, whose attack was halted around 400 yards short of its target.

### A NOVEL APPROACH

With the failure of the third day's attacks on the bridge, new thinking was called for. Gavin had already planned for the crossing of the Waal in boats by the British 43rd Division, but the ground attack was so badly behind that the 43rd had yet to leave Allied lines and advance up Highway 69. Instead, the boats that were to be used for this crossing – folding canvas craft that were easily transportable – would be used to ferry the 3rd Battalion of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment over the river. They would attack the northern end of the bridges from a concealed position in the Maas-Waal Canal about a mile downstream of the railway bridge. Meanwhile, the Grenadier Guards would launch a simultaneous attack on the southern end. The boats, currently in Bourg St Leopold, in Allied-held territory south of the Hells Highway drop zones, would need to be brought up the road to Nijmegen by lorry. This was no easy task. Although in Allied

hands, Highway 69 was congested by the advancing XXX Corps and frequently attacked by the Germans. Also, they would pass through Eindhoven, which had just been targeted by German bombers, killing or injuring around 3,000 civilians and blocking parts of the city with rubble.

Twenty-eight canvas paddle boats were promised for around 8am on the fourth day, Wednesday 20 September, with the 504th tasked with securing the south bank by then. Like so much of Operation Market Garden, it didn't go according to the planned timetable. On Wednesday morning, the Grenadier Guards blasted through the German perimeter, backed by the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. They were up against strong machine gun positions and occupied houses along the route; progress was slow. As the approach to the bridge was overlooked by the Valkhof, a medieval tower, both it and its surrounding park needed to be cleared before an attack on the south side of the bridge could be contemplated. This was finally achieved by the Grenadier Guards at around 3pm the same day.

### BANKS OF THE WAAL

The paratroopers secured the rooftops of the densely built-up town, while the Irish Guards and Lieutenant Colonel Reuben Tucker's 504th moved west towards the riverbank, getting into position around midday. What they saw showed just how risky a daylight river crossing would be. The Waal was around 400 yards wide and fast flowing. The troops on the boats  
*Continued on page 96 ►*

GERMAN ARTILLERY  
ON THE BRIDGE  
WAS EXCEPTIONALLY  
WELL ORGANISED,  
AND SUPPORTED BY  
HIGH-QUALITY  
SS INFANTRY





Major General William H. Tunney, Jr., 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Army, in Nijmegen, 1945.

# ASSAULT BOAT 3D BATTALION, 504<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY REGIMENT WAAL RIVER 20 SEPTEMBER

**T**he earlier failed attempts to capture the Waal River highway and railroad bridges at Nijmegen led to a desperate attempt at 2pm on 20 September by two companies of the 3d Battalion, 504th PIR.

Folding canvas assault boats were provided 20 minutes before H-Hour by the Royal Engineers. The paratroopers, unfamiliar with the 137-lb, 12-ft-long, 4-ft-wide boats, carried them over a dike then across a wide, flat shore to the river while artillery and aircraft pounded the enemy side. Halfway across the 400-yard-wide river a brisk wind blew away the smoke screen, completely exposing the 32 boats. The fast 10-nph current was too much for the boats' five paddlers and the nine paratroopers in each, now exposed to heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, frantically used their rifles to paddle across. Half of the boats were destroyed or so shot up as to be unable to return for more troops. Small groups of survivors fought their way to the north end of the bridge while the 505th PIR, supported by British tanks, overwhelmed defenders on the south end. Close to 300 Germans were killed at the bridges, but the 504th lost 200 of its own, resulting in the award of the Presidential Unit Citation. ■







*Continued from page 92*

would be prime targets for the Germans on the north bank, even with covering fire from the south. Due to delays in taking the south bank and getting the boats to the Waal, the crossing was cancelled twice during the morning, much to Brigadier General Gavin's frustration. The delays were not good for morale. The longer the troops had to wait, the more time they had to contemplate just how dangerous the crossing would be. Gavin was also aware that the 1st Airborne in Arnhem was on its own, and long overdue being relieved.

As if this wasn't enough, Gavin also received a radio message telling him that the previous day Beek and Mook had been overrun by General Kurt Feldt's forces, threatening the Moelenhoek bridge and the Maas-Waal Canal. Leaving Tucker to deal with the crossing of the Waal, Gavin left to drive back Feldt's attack.

The boats and their engineers eventually arrived at around 2:30pm. Two crossings were planned, ferrying around 260 men in all. Two companies of Major Julian Cook's 3rd Battalion of the 504th would cross first. Another company of the 3rd and one from Lieutenant Colonel William Harrison's 1st would follow in the second crossing. They would be covered by around a hundred British guns, two tank squadrons, artillery and mortars. Smokescreens would be laid down to help conceal the crossing craft too.

## COVERING SMOKE

Twenty-six boats had made it to the river. These craft were made of canvas and plywood. Nineteen feet long and powered by eight paddles, they each carried 13 troops plus their equipment. They were crewed by three engineers from

Tanks Invader Allied Sherman  
tanks crossing the newly-  
captured bridge at Nijmegen



"THE ACK-ACK WAS SUCH AS I HAVE ONLY HEARD IN THE WORST RAIDS ON LONDON, BUT CONCENTRATED ON ONE SMALL AREA"

GLIDER PILOT LOUIS HAGEN

the 82nd Airborne's C/307th Airborne Engineer Battalion, who were to take the boats back to the south bank after the first crossing. Ahead of the planned 3pm launch, at 2:30pm eight Typhoons rocketed and machine gunned German positions on the south bank. Fifteen minutes later, an artillery barrage using high explosive shells began. The artillery also fired white phosphorus to create covering smoke, but the wind over the river rendered this ineffective.

As the first crossing began, it became clear the boats were overloaded; worse, the troops were untrained in river crossings. The paratroopers struggled to control the craft in the fast-flowing river, and a few capsized. Paddles were in short supply, and some troopers used their rifle butts instead. As the boats reached the middle of the river, the Germans opened fire with machine guns, artillery and mortars. Casualties were heavy. Only half the boats reached





the other side of the river. Several troopers were stranded in the water after their boats were destroyed, and they struggled to swim to the nearest bank under the weight of their equipment. Those troops that did land immediately launched an attack on the Germans, killing around 50 soldiers with gun, grenade and bayonet.

By the time the surviving boats had made it back to the south bank, there were just 11 craft left, plus two rafts that

had been built by the Guards' engineers to carry anti-tank guns. Five or six further crossings were made before all the waiting troops had been ferried. Although casualties were high, the crossing was carried out with incredible bravery. As Lieutenant General Browning later commented, "I never saw such a gallant action."

The assault on the railway bridge began at around 4:20pm. With the infantry that had made the boat crossing approaching

the northern end and the Irish Guards leading an assault from Allied-held territory in the south, the Germans started to withdraw north to prevent themselves becoming trapped on the bridge. They took 267 casualties in all. With the rail bridge in Allied hands, the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment on the north bank pressed on to the road bridge, assisted by four Sherman tanks from the Grenadier Guards who drove across the newly captured rail bridge. ►



Engineers neutralised demolition charges to stop the Germans blowing it up.

Two of the Shermans were lost almost immediately, but the other two pressed on, taking out the German anti-tank gun crews before they could reload. After heavy fighting, by late afternoon the road bridge was also in Allied hands. The units of the 504th and the five tanks of the Guards Armoured Division that had already crossed the bridge were joined by two companies of Irish Guards. However,

instead of advancing north towards Arnhem, they were ordered to stop and wait – much to the frustration of the Americans, who felt their sacrifices in taking the bridges were being wasted.

### **COSTLY DELAY**

After the confusion at the Nijmegen bridges (which, to be fair, should already have been in Allied hands when the XXX Corps arrived), XXX Corps commander Lieutenant General Horrocks felt time

was needed to sort things out and get his troops back into order. The advance to Arnhem didn't begin until noon on Thursday 21 September – 18 hours after the bridge had been captured. This was an extremely controversial delay that many commentators have blamed for the failure of Operation Market Garden. As Brigadier General Gavin wrote in his diary, "Had [US 82nd Airborne Division commander Lieutenant General] Ridgeway been in command at that





*Welsh approach Cromwell tanks of the 2nd Welsh Guards crossing the bridge at Nijmegen, 21 September*

moment, we would have been ordered up that road in spite of all our difficulties, to save the men at Arnhem." However, it must be pointed out the time spent reorganising after the crossing was not the only reason the attack was behind schedule. The 82nd Airborne's failure to capture the bridges on time had already caused a 36-hour-long delay.

What is beyond dispute is that the delays allowed the Germans to reinforce their defences. With both ends of the

Arnhem bridge now back in German hands, they were able to move forces south of the Rhine using that crossing. A German defensive position had already been established at Ressen, about four miles north of Nijmegen and just under nine miles south of Arnhem. By the time the XXX Corps made a move, the German position consisted of two infantry battalions (one of which was SS), 11 tanks, two 88mm batteries, numerous 20mm flak guns and the forces that

successfully retreated from Nijmegen as the Allies took the bridges. A formidable defence was blocking Highway 69.

### EVASIVE MANOEUVRE

Moving north, the Irish Guards began their advance at around 1:30pm but lacked the artillery support to smash through the German defensive line. At the same time, marshy terrain meant it was impossible for the Guards to outflank it. The 43rd Division was ordered to take the lead, and work around the enemy defences in order to reach the Polish Independent Parachute Brigade at Driel. However, the 43rd was at the time almost ten miles behind and caught in the congestion. It wasn't until the following day, Friday 22 September, that the entire division had crossed the Waal and made its way towards Driel.

"AT 1500 FEET, THE SHEER COLD-BLOODED PLUCK AND HEROISM OF THE SUPPLY PILOTS WAS QUITE INCREDIBLE"

BLIND PILOT LOUIS HAGEN

At around 3pm, the 82nd Airborne Division had received a supply drop brought in by 406 C-47 glider tugs and 33 C-47 cargo carriers. Around two thirds of the supplies were recovered, with the help of Dutch civilians, a pretty good figure considering the difficulties in making the drops. Glider pilot Louis Hagen was impressed by the supply pilots' bravery. "The sheer cold-blooded pluck and heroism of the pilots was quite incredible," he wrote in his memoirs about one such drop. "They came in, in their lumbering four-engined machines, at 1,500 feet, searching for our position. The ack-ack was such as I have only heard during the worst raids on London, but concentrated on one small area. The German gunners were firing at point blank range and the supply planes were sitting targets ... how those pilots could've gone into it with their eyes open is beyond my imagination." ■



*Journeymen: An American anti-tank gun and crew rolls into Holland from Belgium at the border town of Borbeck*



# ACTIONS ELSEWHERE

## WITH THE XXX CORPS ADVANCING ALONG THE MAIN AXIS OF THE BRITISH SECOND ARMY'S LINE OF THE OFFENSIVE, VIII AND XII CORPS STEADFASTLY HELD THE FLANKS

**W**hile the middle of the week saw the action concentrated in the Arnhem, Oosterbeek and Nijmegen areas, significant battles and skirmishes were also being fought elsewhere.

Advancing towards Wijchen, just over six miles south-west of Nijmegen, the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment attacked the Edithbridge from the south on the morning of Tuesday 19 September. It was secured after a fierce battle. The paratroopers then moved on to the road bridge just south of the town and secured this too. The Germans tried to retake the Edithbridge from the north end on Thursday 21 September. For a while it looked like they might succeed but the 504th, with help from the 101st Airborne Division, managed to force them back.

In the 101st Airborne Division's zone, north of Eindhoven, the Germans launched an attack on the newly built Bailey bridge at Son on the Tuesday. As this was currently the only crossing over the Wilhelmina Canal, its destruction or capture would cut off the Allies' route north to Nijmegen and Arnhem. A reconnaissance force from the 107th Panzer Brigade attacked from the town of Best in the west, running into the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment. After several hours of fighting, the 506th was reinforced by the 15th and 19th Hussars with six Churchill tanks and a Challenger tank with a mounted flamethrower. Faced with formidable armour, the Germans capitulated, and over 1,100 prisoners

were taken. During this battle, the Son road bridge was closed to traffic, delaying the progress of the lorries carrying the canvas assault boats destined for the Waal crossing at Nijmegen.

Later on, a small panzer force arrived and began firing on the bridge, but these too were repelled. Had the two attacks on the Bailey bridge been better co-ordinated, they would have presented a much bigger threat, but luckily for the 101st Airborne defending it, this was not the case.

By Tuesday morning, the XII Corps, on the XXX Corps' left flank and to the west of the highway, had yet to break out of Belgium, but it was making some progress in its advance to Kasterlee and Turnhout. The XII Corps met fierce resistance and was unable to proceed north to support the 101st Airborne at the southern end of the Allied-held section of the highway, but the Americans were holding their own. The troops of

VIII Corps on the right flank were in a similar position.

### MARSHY TERRAIN

The VIII and XII Corps did much to protect the main ground force of XXX Corps as it broke out of Allied lines in the early stages of Operation Garden. However, marshy and wooded terrain meant it was impossible for them to keep up with the forces advancing up Highway 69. They had waterways of their own to negotiate too. After crossing the Meuse-Escaut Canal, the VIII Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Richard O'Connor, faced the Zuid-Willemsvaart Canal, building four 40-ton bridges. Pressing north in support of the XXX Corps, they had captured the Dutch towns of Deurne and Helmond by the end of the week, taking over a hundred prisoners.

Lieutenant General Neil Ritchie's XII Corps also made slow progress, eventually reaching as far north as 's-Hertogenbosch and Heesch, but only after Operation Market Garden was officially over.

The VIII Corps' and XII Corps' contribution to Operation Market Garden has largely gone unsung in the years since World War II. As military historian David Bennett put it, "Almost nothing has been written about the operations of VIII and XII Corps. Few have consulted the unit histories written in the immediate post-war period and even fewer have put these two corps into the context of Second Army operations in September 1944." ■

"ALMOST NOTHING  
HAS BEEN WRITTEN  
ABOUT THE  
OPERATIONS OF VIII  
AND XII CORPS..."

DAVID BENNETT,  
MILITARY HISTORIAN

# BLACK FRIDAY, DARK WEEKEND

HEAVILY SHELLLED AND MORTARED BY THE GERMANS,  
THE 1ST AIRBORNE DIVISION'S POSITION SOON WORSENERD

**B**y Friday 22 September, day five of Operation Market Garden, the Germans had adopted the same tactics in Oosterbeek as they had used in Arnhem. Instead of rushing the Allied-occupied area and risking the British anti-tank guns, they probed and prodded, laying down artillery and mortar fire to keep the paratroopers from resting, and limiting mobile attacks to specific positions. It left the surviving troops from the 1st Airborne Division outnumbered by four to one.

The Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade under Major General Stanislaw Sosabowski was stuck in Driel, unable to cross the Rhine but nevertheless performing a useful function by forcing the Germans to redeploy troops that might otherwise have been brought to bear on the 1st Airborne. The Germans withdrew 2,400 troops from Oosterbeek, moving south of the river to engage the Polish and stop them pressing east to Highway 69. Had the Polish brigade travelled east, the German forces currently dug into a defensive position at Ressem to block the passage of the XXX Corps would have been sandwiched between the advancing ground forces to the south and the Polish paratroopers to the north. The German troops kept the Poles busy with minor attacks throughout the day, but little was achieved by either side.

XXX Corps reconnaissance units arrived in Driel on Friday morning: two scout cars and two armoured cars from Captain Richard Wrottesley's Household Cavalry. These proved important as they

held functional radios, so Sosabowski could now make reports directly to XXX Corps' headquarters. Co-ordinates could be sent to artillery units, allowing them to better target the German units surrounding the Allies at Oosterbeek.

## GERMAN WITHDRAWAL

The new arrivals from the Household Cavalry were quickly sent into action when around six half-tracks and some panzer grenadiers advanced through the orchards towards the Driel HQ, breaking through Polish lines. They were at first reluctant to join the battle as their radios were of prime importance. But Sosabowski pointed out that if they didn't help out then their presence would be academic as there wouldn't be a position to report on. The Germans withdrew, and two more attacks were also beaten back.

Major General Roy Urquhart ordered his Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mackenzie, and Lieutenant ►

THE GERMAN  
TROOPS KEPT THE  
POLES BUSY WITH  
MINOR ATTACKS  
THROUGHOUT THE  
DAY, BUT LITTLE  
WAS ACHIEVED

IWM via Getty Images







*Four paratroopers moving through a shell-torn structure after they had retreated after being driven out of Arnhem, 23 September 1944*





PADDLING THE  
DINGHIES AGAINST  
A TEN-KNOT  
RHINE CURRENT  
USING SPADES  
AND RIFLE BUTTS  
SEEMED THE  
ONLY SOLUTION

Colonel Eddie Myers, commanding officer of the Royal Engineers, to cross the Rhine and make contact with the Polish paratroopers and the advance units of the XXX Corps when they arrived. The two British officers evaded the German positions on the north bank, and made the crossing in a rubber dinghy. On meeting with Sosabowski they pleaded for reinforcements for Oosterbeek, arguing that "even five or ten might make a difference", significantly raising the morale of the beleaguered defenders.

The British promised a handful of dinghies to get the Polish troops across the Rhine, though there were no paddles. The Poles joined in by building rafts, lashing together old doors, floorboards and just about anything that would float. None of the rafts proved suitable for the crossing, however, so they had to rely solely on the dinghies, six two-man craft and a bigger RAF dinghy. Another problem was that the British only held a small part of the riverbank. If the dinghies drifted too far downstream they would come under German fire while on the river, and would be sitting ducks for the occupying enemy if they reached the opposite bank. An attempt was made to tie plaited telephone cables across the river, allowing the boats to make a straight crossing as their passengers threaded the cable between their hands to guide the boat. This also failed; the current was too strong, and the rocks on each bank kept snapping the cables.

### DAINGEROUS CROSSING

Paddling the dinghies against a ten-knot current using spades, rifle butts and whatever else could be found seemed the only solution. The first two crossings, carried out under cover of darkness, were successful, but during the third the Germans lit up the river with flares and fired on the dinghies, sinking two and rendering much of the remainder too badly damaged to be used. By dawn the next day, the crossing – which was far too dangerous to be attempted in daylight – was called off, with only 52 Polish troops having crossed the river. Sosabowski asked the Allies at Nijmegen for more suitable boats, and was promised 12 craft that could carry 18 men each – the canvas and plywood craft that had just been used to cross the Waal in the capture of the Nijmegen bridges. These were to be sped through the XXX Corps traffic gridlock on Highway 69 and rushed to the Rhine. Another crossing was planned for Saturday night.

The Polish troops that had crossed the river made their way to Oosterbeek, and found a shattered city. Houses were burning, gardens pocked with foxholes and trenches, and corpses of the fallen lay everywhere. Inadequate medical facilities were being overwhelmed by the wounded. The Germans were so close to the edge of the ever-diminishing British perimeter the Allies could hear their voices. But the paratroopers of the 1st Airborne enthusiastically welcomed their new comrades. As predicted, their arrival greatly lifted morale.

### ARMY CONTACT

On Friday evening, advance units of the 43rd Division – who were leading the XXX Corps advance – arrived at Driel. There were Sherman tanks from the Royal Dragoon Guards and some of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. The troops on the Rhine had finally made contact with the Second Army.

By Saturday morning, the Germans realised that the Polish paratroopers were trying to cross the river and reinforce the British at Oosterbeek, so they launched a fierce attack on the British-held section of the northern riverbank. Had they succeeded, the Poles would have been cut off south of the river, but despite heavy casualties on both sides, the 1st Airborne prevailed. A simultaneous attack on the south side of the river was intended to pin down the Poles, stopping them crossing the Rhine to reinforce Oosterbeek. With the assistance of the newly arrived XXX Corps' tanks and troops, this too was repelled.

The boats from the Waal crossing arrived at the Rhine around midnight, along with Canadian engineers. The Poles, expecting craft that could take 18 men, had organised themselves into appropriately sized groups. When the boats arrived, it was found they could only carry a dozen men each. A third of the troops were stood down to wait for a later crossing, and the rest crossed the river under fire. Worse still, there were no trained crews to operate them, and the members of the 3rd Battalion of the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade had no training in water crossings. The crossing began, under fire, at around 3am, when there were only a few hours of covering darkness left. Only 153 Poles crossed the river before it grew too light to continue.

The arrival of the Poles in Oosterbeek once again lifted morale, but such a ▶



small force could do little to turn the tide of the battle. Some of them displayed a lethal lack of experience too. As pathfinder Sergeant Ron Kent observed, "They stood around chattering, quite unaware of the danger of standing in large groups. Some went through the garden to the house next door and took ten casualties in 15 minutes because they didn't keep low to the ground. Their officer, a captain, was sniped and killed within five minutes of his arrival." The area of the north bank held by the British troops was by now only 900 yards across, though this included a vital portion of the riverbank.

## BRANDY TRUCE

But although the fighting was fierce, the enemy was not without compassion. There were by then around 1,200 wounded British, Dutch and Poles within the Allied-held perimeter, many of whom faced being burned alive in the ruined houses they occupied. Senior medical officer Colonel Graeme Warrack asked Urquhart if a truce could be called so they could be evacuated. He agreed, and Warrack led a team of envoys to enemy lines. Lieutenant General Wilhelm Bittrich agreed to the medical truce, and sent Warrack back with a bottle of brandy "for your general". The truce lasted for two hours, starting at 3pm, and apart from a few random bursts of fire, it was very well kept. Around 250 wounded men were evacuated from the Allied-held zone using vehicles from both sides, along with approximately 200 less seriously injured who could walk out of their own accord.

Early in the morning on Sunday 24 September, a battalion of 45 German Tiger tanks was deployed from an armoured train. These were the 50-ton Kampfwagen Mark 6 Version B, 'King Tigers', the heaviest tank in the German army. They split into two groups, with 30 crossing the Arnhem road bridge and reinforcing the defences across the highway north of Nijmegen, stopping the XXX Corps advancing north to Arnhem. The other 15 were sent west to Oosterbeek to join SS Lieutenant Colonel Spindler's 9th SS Panzer Division. These were deployed with limited success as the roads were unable to take their weight and the narrow streets restricted their manoeuvrability. Also deployed were troops with flamethrowers, who were very effective in clearing Allied troops out of the houses they occupied. The

bridgehead was shrinking; if relief did not come soon, it would be lost.

At around 10am, XXX Corps commander Lieutenant General Horrocks arrived at Driel in an armoured car. Waking Sosabowski, he told the Polish commander that a battalion of the 43rd Division (which arrived at the head of the XXX Corps) would cross the Rhine that night with supplies for the troops at Oosterbeek, and his own troops would also make a crossing. Horrocks and Sosabowski then drove to Valburg, a few miles south-west of Driel, for a meeting at 43rd Division HQ. The 43rd's commander, Major General Ivor Thomas, gave a briefing on their plans. At a point just west of the ferry landings, the 4th Dorsets would cross first with the supplies for the 1st Airborne, followed by the Polish 1st Battalion, who would be commanded by the 130th's Brigadier Ben Walton. The Polish 2nd Battalion would cross at the same crossing used by the boats on the previous nights.

## REMOVED FROM COMMAND

Sosabowski was furious, arguing that the crossing points were ill chosen and the forces moving across the Rhine were too small. He believed the whole of the 43rd should cross the river at a point a long way to the west. Anything less than a Division would be "in vain, for no effect, a pointless sacrifice." After the great effort made by the Poles to get there, their commander's views were being ignored, and he was effectively removed from command of his own troops and replaced by Walton, an officer of inferior rank.

Horrocks was unmoved, saying his orders would remain unchanged. Sosabowski then met Lieutenant General Browning, commander of the British airborne forces, who was also at Valburg, and asked what were the chances of bridging the Rhine and getting a significant portion of the XXX Corps across. To his astonishment, he was ►

SEEKING A TRUCE  
TO EVACUATE THE  
INJURED, WARRACK  
LED A TEAM OF  
ENVOYS TOWARDS  
ENEMY LINES

Infantry watch out for  
beside a burnt out truck in a  
Dutch town, 28 September 1944





told "the river crossing may not succeed as there is no adequate equipment."

The Polish commander felt it was quite possible for equipment to be brought to Driel from the highway, moving west off the road to avoid the German defensive position at Ressen, but Browning insisted that until the road was reopened the bridging lorries could not get through.

### CANVAS BOAT CROSSING

The Dorsets, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Tilly, made their crossing at 1am, three hours late. Of the six amphibious DUKWs that were to carry the supplies, only three crossed with the Dorsets. The others made a separate crossing near the ferry site. They all got bogged down on the north bank, with only half the supplies being salvaged.

The troopers once again crossed in canvas boats, under such intense fire that Walton called off the crossing at just 2:15am. Only a battalion had crossed, arriving in fragmented groups, and as Sosabowski had predicted, they landed among German positions. Of the 350 men who had attempted the crossing, 315 had successfully landed on the north bank. But by the following morning, around 200 had surrendered (including Tilly) and 13 had been killed. Only around 75 troops made it to reinforce Oosterbeek, another token force that could achieve little in the grand scheme of things.

Before the crossing, the Allied commanders had agreed that unless the 43rd Division crossed the Rhine successfully and with a clear chance of turning the tide of the battle at Oosterbeek, the bridgehead should be abandoned and the 1st Airborne Division withdrawn. Lieutenant General Miles Dempsey, the overall commander of the British Second Army (the XXX Corps and its flanking XII Corps and VIII Corps), met with Montgomery at 11am on Monday 25 September. It was agreed that the troops on the north bank of the river should be evacuated that night.

The key Allied objective of securing a crossing over the Rhine had failed. All that remained was to effect the withdrawal of what was left of the British 1st Airborne Division on the northern bank. It was mired in an isolated position, surrounded by the Germans on three sides and running out of time, effectively ending Operation Market Garden.

This evacuation was to be known as Operation Berlin. ■





# THE MK V AT ARNHEM

**O**n the sixth day of Operation Market Garden, Friday, 23 September 1944, as the German cordon around the Oosterbeek pocket tightens, two members of the British 1st Airborne Division have ambushed two German Waffen-SS soldiers.

The British sergeant is a pathfinder from 21st Independent Parachute Company. He is armed with a Sten Mk V. The 1st Airborne Division corporal is also armed with a Sten Mk V. Although some Mk Vs had been available for the famous D-Day jump, it was during the preparations for Operation Market Garden that the Mk V received wide issuance. Note that at this point, the front pistol grip is still used; on later versions of the Mk V (produced after June 1945) it would be removed. ■



Illustration and caption © Osprey Publishing



Private John J. Smith  
of the 1st Infantry Division  
stands in front of the  
house in the garden of the  
1st Infantry Division.



# OPERATION BERLIN:

## THE TROOPS ARE

## EVACUATED

TRAPPED IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY NORTH OF THE LOWER RHINE, THE REMNANTS OF THE 1ST BRITISH AIRBORNE DIVISION PREPARED FOR A DANGEROUS WITHDRAWAL

**B**y Monday 25 September it was clear that Operation Market Garden had failed. Delays in taking the bridges at Nijmegen and fiercer-than-expected German resistance meant the bridge at Arnhem could not be taken, so the Rhine could not be crossed and the ground forces would not be able to push into Germany to strike at its industrial heartland.

But there were more pressing issues. The remnants of the British 1st Airborne Division remained trapped north of the Rhine in the Oosterbeek area, surrounded by German forces on three sides and maintaining a weakening grip on a small portion of the river's northern bank.

At 10:30am, Major General Urquhart called a meeting of his senior staff at the Oosterbeek HQ and put together the plans for the withdrawal. As a high degree of stealth would be involved, this operation could only be carried out at night, and it was decided that the troops would not be told until the evening. A visible change in attitude within the perimeter might alert the Germans that something was going on. The plan was that under the cover of night, most of the paratroopers would withdraw and slip across the river. The few that were left would spread out and simulate a defence, before slowly withdrawing themselves. It was important the enemy was kept in the dark about the evacuation for as

long as possible. To this end, radio traffic would continue unabated, and artillery would bombard German positions to the east, giving the appearance of an imminent landing in this area. The escaping men would unite with the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade in Driel. The wounded would have to be left behind, to be taken as prisoners of war, and military police would guard the German prisoners for as long as possible.

### PROBING ATTACKS

With the pull-out not scheduled until after nightfall, the hard-pressed forces inside the British perimeter first faced another day's fighting. The German tactic of sending forth small probing attacks to find a weakness in the Allied defences and then exploiting it was paying dividends. When their tanks found a section that was lightly protected by anti-tank weapons, they smashed through it and did as much damage as possible before reinforcements from another perimeter section arrived. This resulted in the creation of a further weak spot where these reinforcements had been previously deployed. As Sapper Arthur Ayers remarked at the time, "Our position looks hopeless. It's a week ago since we parachuted in here. It seems like a year now."

Perhaps prompted by the previous day's troop crossing, and the desire to destroy the Allied position before it could be

reinforced again, the Germans attacked the perimeter with a new urgency. An assault with mortars, machine guns and Tiger tanks was mounted on the middle of the Allied-held sector, their intention being to split it in half. Their first attack was repelled by well-targeted artillery from the 64th Regiment south of the river, but the defenders within the perimeter were getting low on ammunition. When the first barrage ended, a second German attack – spearheaded by the Tiger tanks – pressed deep into the Allied-occupied sector, making substantial gains. The bridgehead was in trouble. There had been an average of 80 fatalities a day in the Allied-held perimeter, but on this day it rose to 120. Ammo was low, and the weather was worsening. Water was in such short ▶

"IT'S A WEEK AGO SINCE WE PARACHUTED IN HERE. IT SEEMS LIKE A YEAR AGO NOW"

SAPPER ARTHUR AYERS

supply that a group of paratroopers made their way to the fire station to see if any could be found in the abandoned fire engines, but they turned back when an officer from divisional HQ told them they were to pull out that night.

The glider pilots serving as infantrymen within the perimeter were told about the withdrawal at around five in the afternoon. They were to assemble at around 9:15pm. After covering their boots with strips of rug and blanket to reduce noise, they were to make their way to the river, following a white tape laid down by sappers from the 9th Field Company. The Royal Engineers would meet them at the riverbank with 16 assault boats at each of two crossing points, along with Canadian stormboats, which were powered by 50hp Evinrude engines and could carry around 14 men each. Six of these boats would be at the crossing near the ferry point, and 14 at a position near the church.

The withdrawal started at the northern end of the enclave, furthest from the river, with the northern-most troops always the next to go. The Polish, who were the last to arrive and therefore the freshest, would form a rear guard. The whole process was very carefully timetabled, with the exact time and route each group would take made clear. With around 2,500 fighting men to evacuate in the most difficult military manoeuvre of all – retreat under enemy fire – this schedule would have to be followed to the letter.

The troops were withdrawn in groups of around a dozen, with a three-minute interval between each. They were told to leave most of their equipment behind, but keep their small arms. Above all, it was important that the enemy did not realise they were withdrawing; silent movement was called for, and anything that might rattle or otherwise make a noise was to be thrown away before leaving.

FOR NINE DAYS WE  
HAD HELD TO ONE  
BELIEF – THAT THE  
SECOND ARMY WAS  
COMING THROUGH

STAFF SERGEANT  
RONALD GIBSON



Heading home: American troops retreating through the ruins of Nijmegen on 29 September

### RIGHT TO WITHDRAW

Many of the men felt let down. As Staff Sergeant Ronald Gibson put it, "For nine days we had held to one belief – that the Second Army was coming through. We had heard rumours and more rumours of their steady advance to the riverbank, of vast lines of tanks on the Nijmegen road, of lines of guns firing a barrage over our heads. When shells had burst through our window that very afternoon, we thought they might be British."

But however the troops in the perimeter felt, it was clear the Second

Army wasn't in a position to cross the Rhine and the withdrawal was clearly the correct military decision.

The first evacuees arrived at the riverbank at around 10pm. Intense shelling from the XXX Corps kept the Germans busy, and disguised the sounds made by the retreating troops. The weather had taken a turn for the worse, with heavy, driving rain making the withdrawal even more difficult. Some troopers lost their way and failed to find the white tapes guiding them to the riverbank, but most managed it, even in the pitch dark and bad weather.





The plywood Canadian stormboats carried 14 or so passengers and weighed around 500lbs, making them as difficult to handle in the fast-flowing waters. But again and again they crossed the river, ferrying the troops to safety, at least at the eastern-most crossing. The six stormboats in the west weren't used, as it was feared their engines would give away their positions too easily. Towards the end of the evacuation, four of the boats were sent to the eastern site 1,500 yards away, but only two got there. Their motors proved unreliable too, with several

breaking down during a crossing, forcing their passengers to paddle with their rifle butts until the engine could be restarted.

Overall, the withdrawal was orderly and disciplined. If a fight broke out over who was to leave next it was quickly broken up. But the crossing was a slow affair. It was becoming dangerous too, as the Germans gradually realised what was going on. Mortar fire was targeted on the river, one of the boats capsizing as its passengers instinctively pulled away from an exploding shell. Some troopers elected to swim across the river, and those who were thrown into

the water as their boats came under fire were forced to do so. A few were drowned.

### SITTING DUCKS

By around 5am on the morning of Tuesday 26 September, daylight was breaking. Without the cover of darkness, the boats were sitting ducks on the river. The last boat to push off, which left at around 5:30am, lost almost all of its occupants to enemy fire. Although not complete, the evacuation was deemed too dangerous to continue, and was called off. A total of 2,398 survivors had been ►

ferried across the Rhine, with around 300 left on the north bank, unable to make the crossing due to the break of dawn. They were forced to surrender to the Germans, along with the wounded. Of the 10,600 men who had crossed the Rhine to form the Oosterbeek bridgehead, around 1,485 had been killed and 6,414 captured, with about a third of those taken prisoner being walking wounded.

## SPIRITED OPPOSITION

At dawn on Tuesday the Germans once more attacked the perimeter. Although it was by now only defended by a skeleton force, it put up "spirited opposition". Even so, by midday they had penetrated into the heart of the zone previously held by the Allies, and by 2pm it was all over. The exhausted German troops were given ten days' leave. The Waffen-SS drove the remaining Dutch civilians out of Oosterbeek, then looted their homes. Around 10,000 people were forced out of their homes and prevented from returning until after the war. The Allied troops that had crossed the river marched into Driel, where they were given food, rum and cigarettes, at least until supplies ran out, before being driven or marched to Nijmegen.

THE RIVER HAD BEEN LOST; THERE WAS NO CHANCE OF CROSSING IN STRENGTH AND PRESSING INTO GERMANY

Although the Allied zone over the river had been lost and there was now no chance of crossing in strength and pressing on into Germany, the weekend saw some gains made on Highway 69, or 'Hell's Highway'. The 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division had arrived, and attacked the enemy positions blocking the road, reopening it for Allied traffic. The Allied-held section of the highway became known as the Nijmegen Salient, and was handed over to the First Canadian Army in November 1944. It was held for the duration of the war – one of the few strategic gains achieved by Operation Market Garden ■



*Battle weary: A group of British soldiers, survivors of the Battle of Arnhem, reach the relative safety of Belgium*






# WHY DID MARKET GARDEN FAIL?

HOW OVER-OPTIMISM,  
RUSHED PLANNING AND  
OTHER FACTORS LED THE  
ALLIED COMMANDERS INTO  
A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

Operation Market Garden could be compared to a complicated journey by public transport, using several trains and buses but only allowing five or six minutes between each connecting service. On paper it's achievable. If everything goes according to plan, each connection will be made and you get to your destination on time.

But it only takes one thing to go wrong to throw the whole plan into disarray, with no opportunity to catch up later. Just one delayed service, one crowded thoroughfare or one mistake finding the next platform or bus stop, and your connection is missed. So it was with Operation Market Garden. Although feasible, the entire exercise was on a knife edge from the moment it started. There was no room for error. But what went wrong and why? How did the operation that could have taken Germany out of the war and been Field Marshal Montgomery's crowning achievement, instead become a stain on his otherwise exemplary war record? ►



**Battle plans:** Field Marshal Montgomery is shown explaining his future plans to King George VI in his map lorry, 13 October 1944.





## THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

The key to success in Operation Market Garden was the capturing of several important bridges across the rivers and canals on the route through Holland into Germany. Without these bridges, the ground forces couldn't make their advance. First Allied Airborne Army commander Lieutenant General Lewis Brereton said these bridges should be taken with "thunderclap surprise," and where this was achieved – namely at Grave and Veghel – it worked very well. Yet when it came to the most vital and best defended bridges, very little emphasis was put on making a speedy capture using the element of surprise.

A key element in the failure to take the bridge at Arnhem was the decision to make only one air drop on the first day, with the rest of the paratroopers landing on the second day. This left the 1st British Airborne Division unable to deliver the knockout blow quickly and effectively, which is the whole point of an airborne operation. Also, the troops were landed too far from the bridges. This gave the Germans more than enough time to organise and strengthen their defences. It also meant only half the forces landed on the opening day could make for the bridges, as the rest were required to guard the landing and drop zones ready for the next day's drop. Landing closer to the target would have incurred more initial casualties, especially considering the drops were carried out in daylight. However, the paratroopers would have been better able to capture the required bridges at speed.

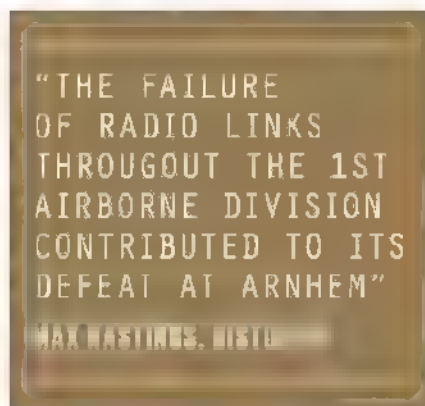
## UNDERRATED ENEMY

With the collapse of the German front after the D-Day Landings in France, it was believed that Operation Market Garden would face little resistance. Indeed, this was the theory that underpinned the entire mission. However, not everyone was convinced. As the plans were outlined to Major General Stanislaw Sosabowski, commander of the 1st Polish Parachute Brigade, he famously asked, "What will the Germans be doing while all this is going on?" But his views were ignored. The prevailing opinion was that the Allied forces would face only under-equipped, third-rate troops. Nothing could have proved further from the truth.

After the initial collapse, the Germans had already started to reorganise and regroup their forces. New units were created from the remnants of those that had been partly destroyed, veteran troops

were used to bolster units made up of untested, newly trained soldiers, and professional, experienced officers such as General Field Marshal von Rundstedt and General Field Marshal Model were put in charge. Showing great flexibility and courage, they managed to hold the bridge at Arnhem, cause massive delays at Nijmegen and disrupt the advance of the Second Army along and around Highway 69.

The II SS Panzer Corps divisions refitting in the area were similarly underestimated. As Montgomery said of the German armour, "We knew it was there, and we were wrong in supposing that it could not fight effectively." In actual fact, even the information of them being there wasn't passed on, leaving the commanders on the ground initially ignorant of their presence. Montgomery ignored suggestions of what to do to account for the Panzer divisions, sticking to the original plan without taking on board this new threat.



## DISRUPTIVE WEATHER

In 1948, Eisenhower somewhat optimistically wrote, "The attack began well and unquestionably would have been successful except for the intervention of bad weather." Montgomery claimed the variable weather and its effects on Operation Market Garden was a factor that was outside the Allies' control, yet better planning could have limited the problems it caused. It was the weather that delayed the deployment of the Polish paratroopers, who arrived on day five instead of day three. It left the 101st Airborne Division without artillery for two days and the 82nd Airborne for a day, and also limited the availability of air support, keeping Allied ground attack aircraft on fog bound airstrips. The whole operation was running to a very strict timetable; undoubtedly, any plan that could be thrown into such disarray by an uncontrollable factor such as the weather is inherently flawed.

## TOO LITTLE PREPARATION

Very little time for planning was allowed for Operation Market Garden. The D-Day landings in Normandy were months in the making, with plans checked and rechecked until nothing was left to chance. The plans for Market Garden, on the other hand, were put together in about a week.

With better planning, many of the problems that befell the operation might have been anticipated and solved. Air support could have been improved, for example, as could communications, the failure of which dogged the mission from the beginning. Landing boats could have been carried in greater numbers and been made available more quickly, giving the Allies another option for crossing rivers should a bridge be destroyed or remain untaken. The ferry between Driel and Heveadorp could have been taken as a priority too, when in fact the troops on the ground were unaware of its existence at the beginning of the operation.

It could also be argued, however, that the purpose of Operation Market Garden was to seize the initiative, striking while the Germans were on the run after the Normandy landings. Planning time was something Montgomery simply didn't have.

## BAD COMMUNICATION

The poor quality of its radio sets dogged the British army throughout World War II, and Operation Market Garden was no exception. As historian Max Hastings put it, "The failure of radio links throughout the 1st Airborne Division contributed significantly to its defeat at Arnhem, and represented a professional disgrace to the British Army. The RAF between 1942 and 1945 deployed some of the most advanced electronic technology in the world, but British military wireless communications remained unreliable, and this weakness sometimes significantly influenced the course of battles." The radios used in Operation Market Garden were known to be unreliable and, bizarrely, the distances over which they were expected to operate exceeded their range.

## LACK OF PROGRESS

The XII and VIII Corps, operating to the east and to the west of the XXX Corps as they progressed up Highway 69, quickly fell behind and were unable to fulfil their role of protecting the flanks of the main force. This left the advancing ground units extremely vulnerable to attack, ►





which in turn caused delays and forced the XXX Corps to fall behind schedule.

Falling behind was not entirely the fault of the flanking forces. The terrain on either side of the highway was frequently marshy or wooded, making progress slow. Again, bad planning had caused them to be set a largely impossible task.

### LIMITED SUCCESS?

Although it failed in its key objective – opening a front over the Rhine and into Germany, outflanking the German western defences – it's not quite fair to say Operation Market Garden achieved nothing. The gains made along Highway 69 were retained, and became known as the Nijmegen Salient, which penetrated 60 miles into occupied Holland. Also, the VIII Corps, acting on the right flank of the XXX Corps, closed down the banks of the Meuse as far as Sambeek, preventing the Germans reinforcing over the river.

The operation's apologists made much of these achievements in the immediate aftermath and the years after the war. Churchill stated the battle had been a decisive victory, and Montgomery claimed it was 90% successful, as his troops had gained 90% of the land the operation sought to capture – a ridiculous assertion. As Brigadier John Hackett rightly said, "If you did not get all the bridges, it was not worth going at all."

Until Ryan Cornelius' book *A Bridge Too Far* was published in 1974, the strategic value of gains made in Operation Market Garden tended to be overstated. As historian Max Hastings put it, "[The Nijmegen Salient] was a cul-de-sac which took the Allies to nowhere until February 1945. For eight weeks after the Arnhem battle, the two US Airborne divisions were obliged to fight hard to hold the ground they'd won in September, even though it had become strategically worthless." ■

"THE US DIVISIONS  
FOUGHT HARD TO  
HOLD THEIR GROUND,  
EVEN THOUGH IT  
WAS STRATEGICALLY  
WORTHLESS"

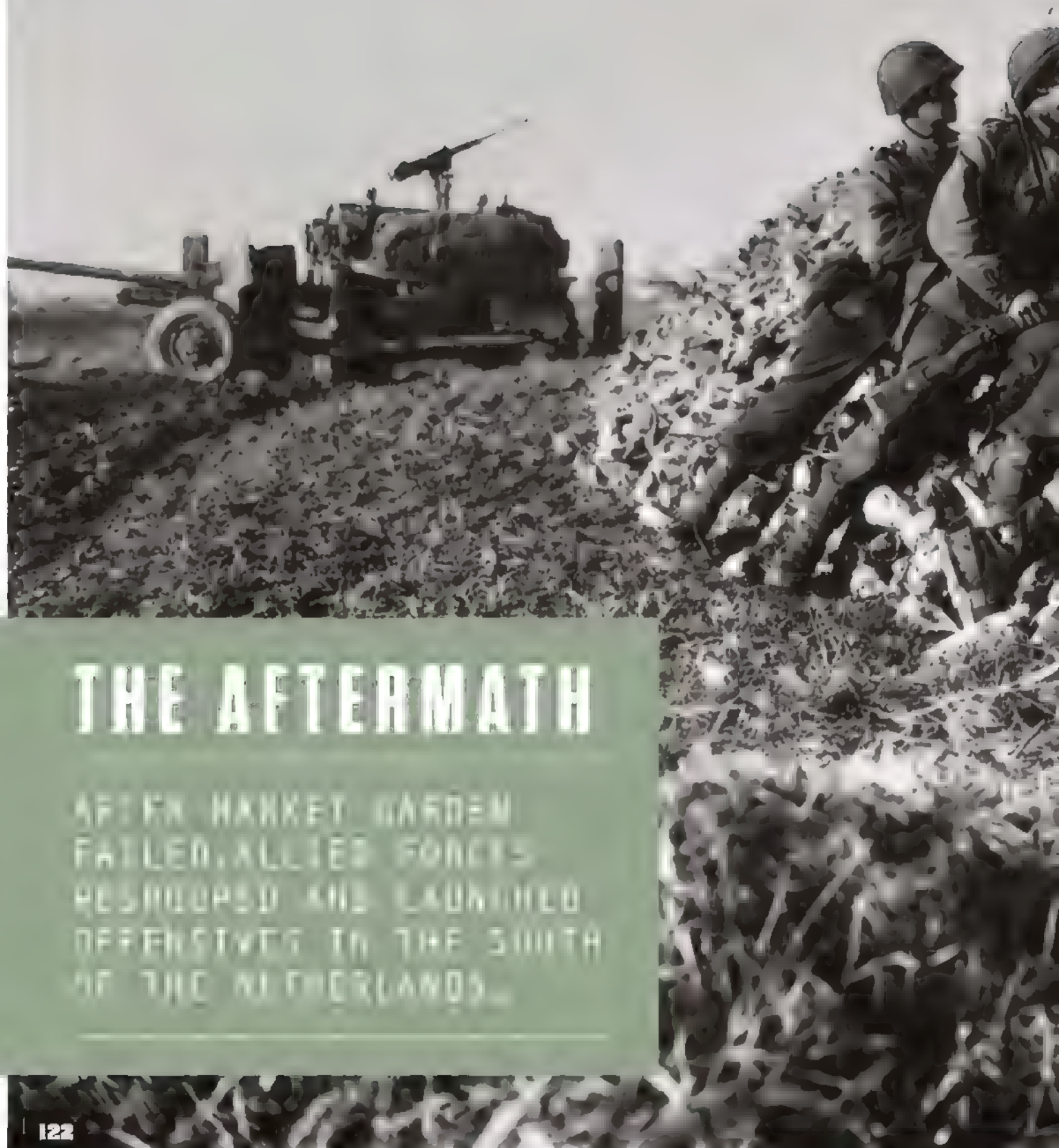
MAX HASTINGS, HISTORIAN

*Initial attack: A fleet of Allied  
aircraft drop paratroopers over  
Holland on 17 September*



CHAPMAN STATED THAT  
OPERATION MARKET  
GARDEN WAS "THE  
GREATEST VICTORY."

THE AFTERMATH  
OF THE BATTLE  
OF HANKESTADT

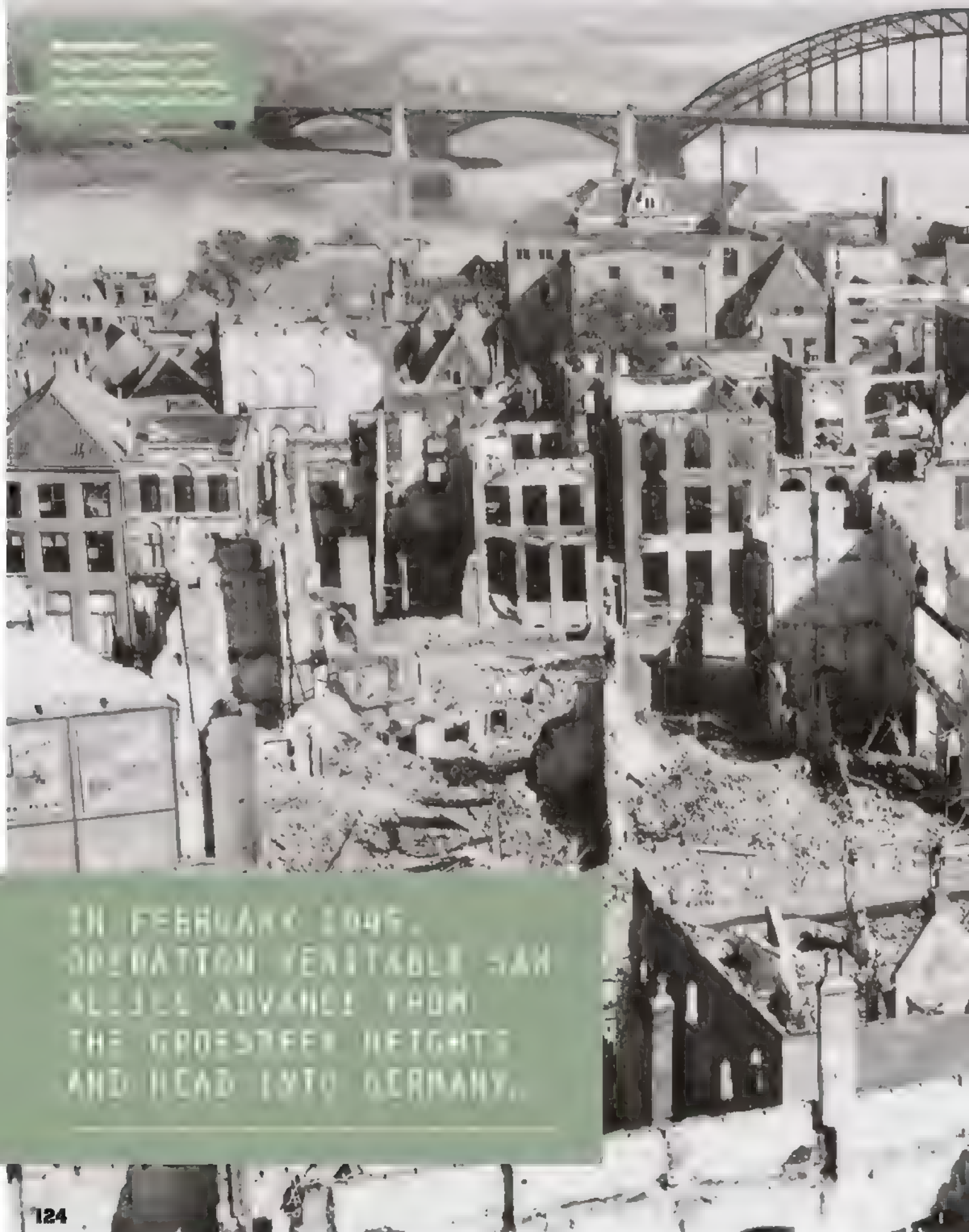


## THE AFTERMATH

AFTER HANKESTADT GARDEN  
FALLER, ALLIED FORCES  
RESUMED AND LAUNCHED  
OFFENSIVES IN THE SOUTH  
OF THE NETHERLANDS.







IN FEBRUARY 1945,  
OPERATION VENTURER SAW  
ALLIES ADVANCE FROM  
THE GROENSTEEN HEIGHTS  
AND HEAD INTO GERMANY.



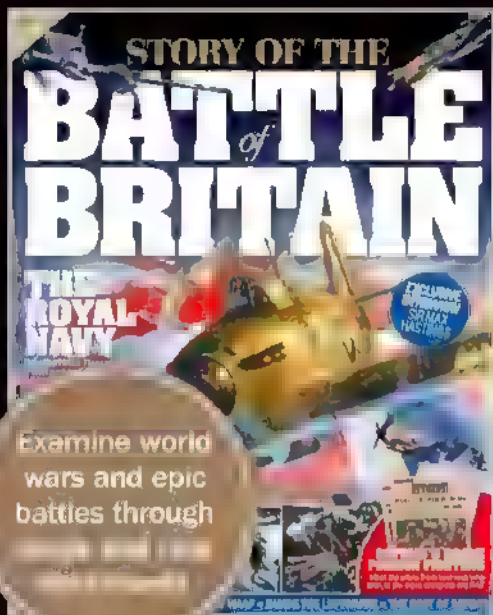
ARMY WAS EVENTUALLY  
LIBERATED ON 14 APRIL  
1945. WITH THE REMAINING  
GERMAN FORCES IN HOLLAND  
SURRENDERING ON 5 MAY ■

RESEARCHED BY JAMES M. HARRIS

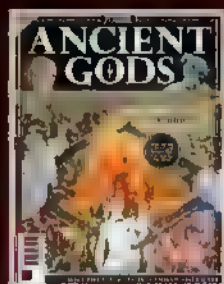
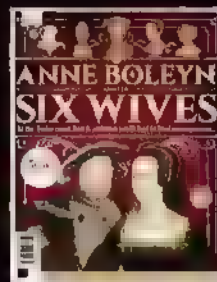
General Eisenhower  
General Patton  
General Bradley  
General Montgomery



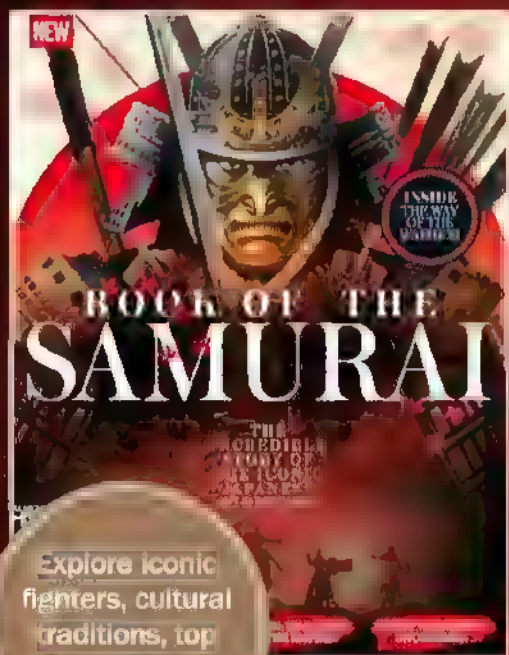




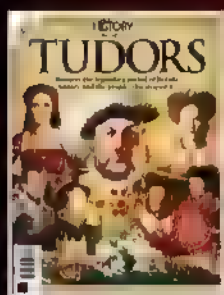
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Explore iconic fighters, cultural traditions, top tactics and weapons



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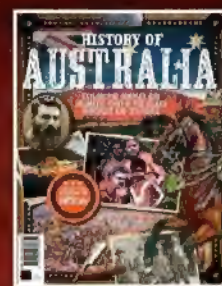
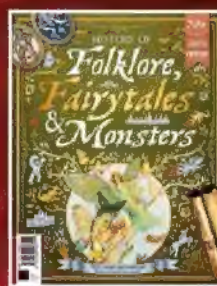
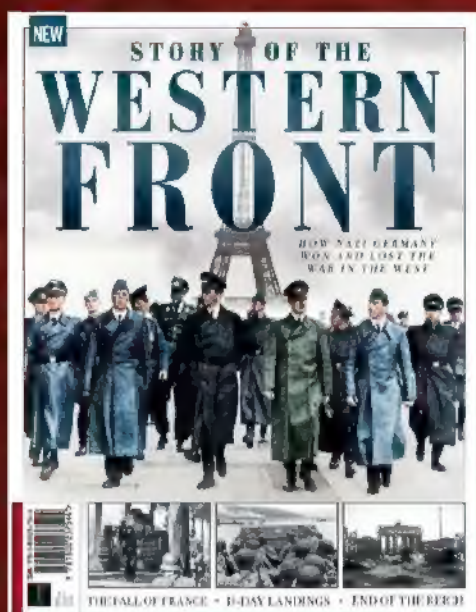


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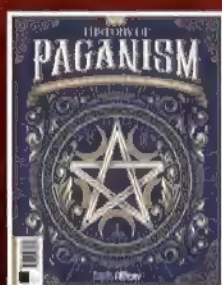
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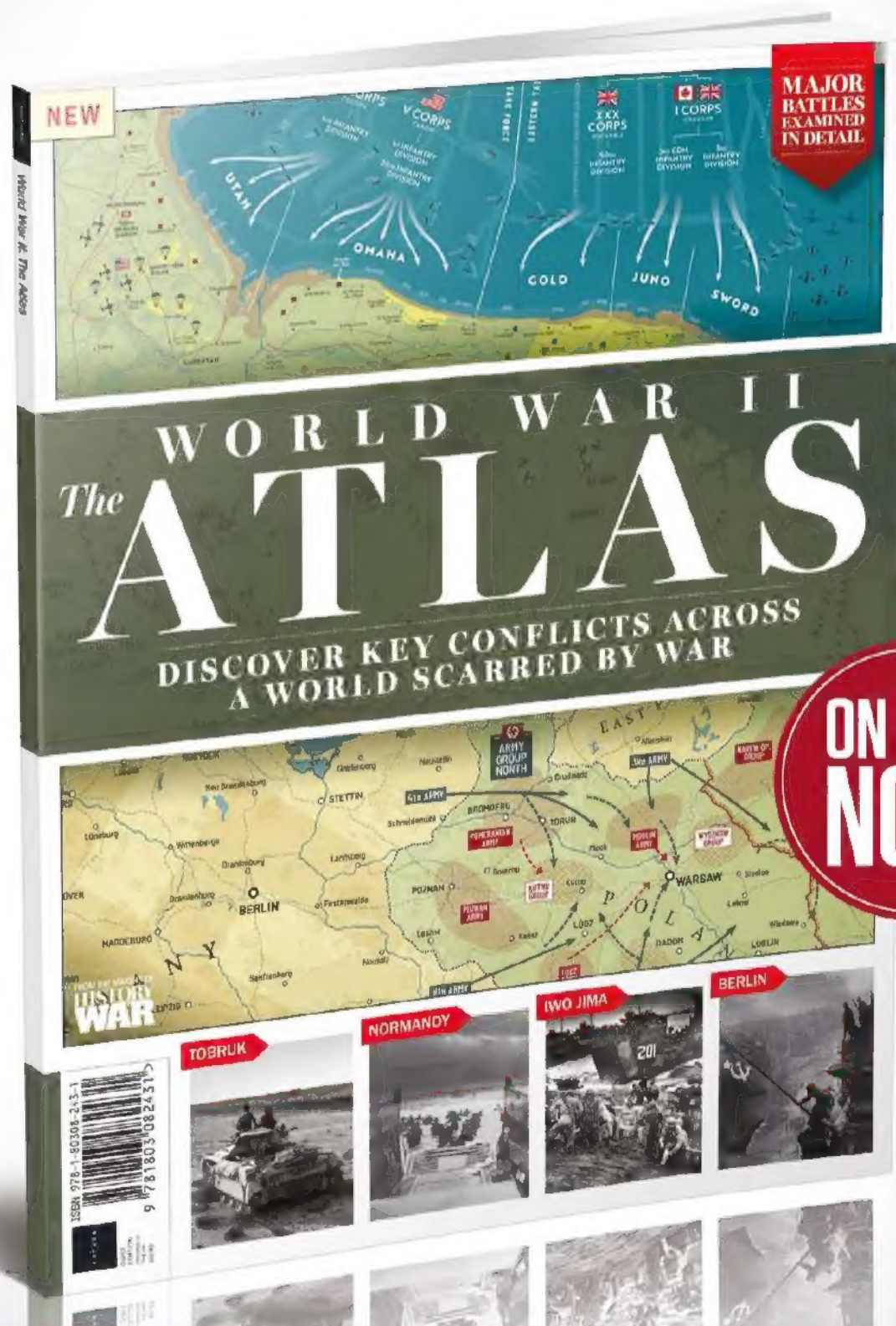
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## Contributors

Marcus Hawkins, Ian Lloyd-Edwards, David Dias,  
Tim Hardwick, Charlotte Martyn

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## Circulation

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Chief executive **Edith Syme-Thorne**  
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Chief financial and strategy officer **Denny Laidin Brand**  
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442244



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